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ABSTRACT

Section A of the Miscellaneous Studies section of the proceedings contains the following 17 papers: "Readability Reconsidered: A Study of Reader Reactions to Differences in Fog Indexes" (Katherine C. McAdams); "Country and Nostalgia: Space and Time in Magazine Journalism" (Allen W. Palmer); "Images and Descriptions: A Semiotic Analysis of Specialty Fashion Catalogs for Non-Standard Women" (Anna Banks and Linda Coulter); "The Production of Meaning in Wedding Photography" (Charles Lewis); "The Sound of Fact" (Patricia Westfall); "Newspapers and Citizenship: Young Adults' Subjective Experience of the Newspaper Form" (Kevin G. Barnhurst and Ellen Wartella); "Mennonite Culture and Communication: How Media Use Shapes Identity" (Sharon Hartin Iorio); "Daily Newspaper Coverage of the Gay and Lesbian Community: Perceptual Differences of Senior Editors and their Gay and Lesbian Staffers" (Joseph Bernt and Marilyn Greenwald); "Predictors of Job Burnout in Reporters and Copy Editors" (Betsy B. Cook and Steven R. Banks); "Predictors of Job Satisfaction among Black Journalists" (Sharon Bramlett-Solomon); "The Experiences of Female Journalism Graduates in the Canadian Labour Market: A Longitudinal Assessment" (Fiona A. E. McQuarrie); "Differences at Work and at Home: Factors in Career Advancement by Male and Female News Directors" (Kimberly K. Burks and Vernon A. Stone); "Teaching Freedom of Speech in the Large Lecture Classroom" (Joel Geske); "Overcoming the Drawbacks of the Large Lecture Classroom" (Joel Geske); "Media Frames: Approaches to Conceptualization and Measurement" (James W. Tankard, Jr. and others); "The Impact of Prior Beliefs and Disclosure of Methods on Perceptions of Poll Data Quality and Methodological Discounting" (Daniel M. Merkle); and "World without Rebellion: Life of the Working-Class Women in Popular Culture" (Eung-Sook Kim). (SR)

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# Readability Reconsidered:
# A Study of Reader Reactions to Differences in Fog Indexes

by

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Presented at the 1991 meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication in Boston, Mass., August 7-10, 1991.

In 1989, amid declining newspaper circulations and rising rates of illiteracy, a group of newspaper editors asked an old but persistent question: Are newspapers too hard to read? The present study was commissioned by the Literacy Committee of the American Society of Newspaper Editors to determine (a) whether newspaper reading levels are too difficult for the reading public, especially for marginally literate people and (b) whether improved readability can attract readers.

## Previous Readability Research

Previous research indicates that news writing has been and still is difficult even for literate people to understand. Hoskins (1973) found that wire service copy could be classified by standard readability measures as "difficult" or "very difficult" to read. Stempel (1981) studied readability of 21 newspapers and found that they all were difficult reading, judging by their scores on Flesch readability indexes. Stempel found that dense prose dominated all six categories of news that he examined: International, national, local, editorial, sports and lifestyle.

These and other readability studies have used measures of readability developed at mid-century. Some researchers, such as Robert Gunning, were employed by major wire services to of education needed for comfortable reading of a given text. A news story with a Fog index of 7, for example, would require a seventh grade education for full enjoyment and comprehension. Gunning cites Fog indexes ranging 6-10 as the "easy-reading range," and says that most readers are comfortable there regardless of education.

The Fog index is based on psycho-physiological principles: Readers are slowed by long sentences and by complex, unfamiliar language. Other readability measures share these assumptions; they are the Flesch formula (1949); the Dale-Chall formula (1948); and the Cloze procedure (Taylor, 1953).

The validity of readability measures was reinforced by a study at the American Press Institute in which Reiley (1974) found that sentence length was directly--and inversely--related to comprehension; that is, as sentence length goes up, reader understanding and retention goes down.

In the 40 years since readability research began, two interesting trends have taken place: The first and most notorious of these trends is that newspaper circulations have dwindled: Stevenson (1990) describes the phenomenon of the "disappearing" newspaper reader, noting that daily readership has declined from 73 percent in 1967 to 51 percent in 1988. It is safe to say that soon--perhaps even presently--less than half of all Americans will have daily contact with newspapers.

A second, less publicly recognized trend is that readability has remained constant, even though much else about newspapers-- such as content, display and marketing tactics--has changed. The foggy writing termed "difficult" by Hoskins in 1973 and by Stempel in 1981 is almost identical, in terms of readability, to news writing examined in recent studies.

Current research has established that most front-page news still taxes the reading ability and comfort of most readers. Catalano (1990) found that copy from six major wire services typically exceeded standard measures for easy reading. McAdams (1990) found similar problems with readability in a study of presidential coverage in The Washington Post and The New York Times, where Fog indexes for presidential news were, at a minimum, college-level.

Healy (1990) found that Fog indexes measuring readability in seven of ten papers examined by the ASNE Literacy Committee indicated that stories were written for readers with 12 or more years of education. She found particularly high "Fog" in The Washington Post, but expressed greatest concern over "...complex phrases, words and jargon that were used routinely without explanation or context" (p. 19). Healy concludes that some newspapers require too much background on the part of readers; similarly, Catalano (1990) posits that newspaper writers are writing for themselves, rather than for their audiences.

Stapler (1985) provides an explanation for much of the fog, proposing that news writers have a "one-sentence, long-sentence habit of news writing" in which each paragraph, especially the first paragraph, is typically composed of one sentence of more than 25 words.

Fog indexes cited in a study by Danielson and Bryan (1964) indicate that readability may have declined in the past quarter century. In determining that hard news was more difficult to read than features, Danielson and Bryan found average fog indexes to be eighth- and ninth-grade level reading overall. These reading levels compare favorably to the high fog indexes found in more recent studies (McAdams, 1990; Healy, 1990).

## The Study Hypothesis

It appears that news writing is difficult reading for many people. Little is known, however, about how audiences respond to difficult reading. Burgoon and Burgoon (1981) found evidence that readable writing was linked to positive newspaper evaluation. Clear writing also appears to enhance reader comprehension: Reiley (1974) found that when news writing sentences exceed 15 words, comprehension drops sharply. Her calculations indicate that with an average sentence length of 44 words (not unusual for the Post), readers will comprehend less than 10 percent of the material.

But how do readers feel about such hard-to-read news? What behaviors can be expected to follow unsatisfying reading? No research appears to have been done in this specific area. The present study seeks to document how readers react to news that is difficult to read and also to news that has been edited to enhance readability. Questions of reader response to all aspects of news are increasingly important in a new market environment where newspapers must compete for reader attention.

Considering past research, the study focused on one major hypothesis: News stories that, by established measures, are easy to read, will be more positively evaluated by readers than will news stories that are harder to read.

## Method of Study

News stories were selected from the Monroe, Mich., Evening News in seven topical areas: local news, state news, national news, international, sports, features, and editorials. Steve Gray, managing editor at the Evening News, edited the stories to increase their readability by making sentences shorter and terms less complex.

Researchers took the final set of 14 stories--seven pairs containing one edited story and one original story--and computed a Fog index of readability for each story. Fog indexes use sentence length and verbal complexity to determine a level of education needed for comfortable reading of the stories.

Calculations showed that Gray's editing had produced seven stories that, measured by the Fog index, were easier to read than the original, published articles. Fog indexes for the 14 stories, which are presented in Table 1, ranged from 7.0 (seventh grade level) to 22.8 (post doctoral).

Researchers produced 30 photocopies of each of story and attached to each photocopy a questionnaire to assess reader reactions after reading. Each reader read only one story. A sample experimental news story and questionnaire are included here as Appendix A.

On the questionnaire, each reader was asked to rate on a scale from 1 to 7 his or her interest in the story topic, along with ratings of reading ease, perceived writing quality, trust in the reporter and publication, and willingness to buy the paper in which such a story appeared.

## The Sample of Experimental Readers

The more than 400 readers for the experiment read the sample news stories and filled out evaluation forms during the first few minutes of class. In an effort to avoid oversampling undergraduates, sample members were obtained from three sources:

-Students in continuing education classes at Maryland completed the questionnaires for 239 responses;

- a class of undergraduate non-journalism majors was surveyed for another 73 responses;

- an additional 133 completed questionnaires were completed by others in the university community.

This sample of 445 readers spanned a variety of ages and occupations and provided about 30 readers for each of the 14 news story versions. Men and women were represented equally in the sample at slightly more than 200 each.

The final sample, in the main, was a youthful one. Though the readers ranged in age from

17 upward, more than 60 percent were under age 30.

One third of the readers (36 percent) reported that they were full-time students, with the other two thirds equally divided among clerical, service, managerial and professional jobs. About half the readers said they got most of their news from television, while 33 percent said they were newspaper readers.

## Results

Data from the evaluations, analyzed by statistical tests, yielded a startling finding: If readers judged a story topic "interesting," they also perceived the story to be of high quality overall, regardless of measured readability. Respondents of all ages and occupations felt positive about "Foggy" stories in which they were interested.

Table 2 compares correlations between the fog index and reader satisfaction variables with those between expressed interest in topic and reader satisfaction. Significant, low-level correlations were found between the Fog index and (a) satisfaction with story length, (b) feeling that the story was easy to talk about and (c) feeling that the reporter was informed. In contrast, strong, significant relationships were found between the reader interest variable and all but one of the evaluation variables, the perception of bias.

The strong interrelationships among variables shown in Table 3 indicate that interest in topic is a component of an overall, positive feeling about a news story that has little to do with readability, judging by the low and insignificant correlation of .05 found between the two variables (readability and interest in topic).

So which comes first: Reader interest, leading to satisfaction, or reader satisfaction, leading to interest? Regression analysis of predictors of reader satisfaction and interest in topic shown in Table 4 was used to answer this question. The variable of willingness to buy the paper in which the experimental article appeared was used as a measure of reader satisfaction, based on the assumption that purchase is a behavioral expression of satisfaction.

Regression analysis shows that 51 percent of variance could be explained for expressed willingness to buy by the variables in the equation, which included interest in topic. Other predictor variables in the equation were the perception that the newspaper was careful, wanting to keep reading, evaluation of the reporter as "skilled."

In contrast, when interest in topic was used as a dependent variable, regression coefficients remained significant but were not as strong. This decrease suggests that interest is a better predictor of reader satisfaction than vice versa. An interesting aspect of the regression equations is that the Fog index is never included as a predictor in either equation.

The Fog index of readability appears to have little or no relationship to positive reader evaluations of news stories, a finding already supported in Tables 2, 3 and 4. Table 5 divides the sample into two groups--those who read the difficult stories, and those who read the simplified stories--and compares the evaluations of these two groups for five evaluation variables. No significant differences were found in t-tests between the groups overall or within topical groups, suggesting that measured readability had no effect on evaluation.

Analysis by story topic, rather than by story readability, appears to show some slight variation in reader evaluation of difficulty on a scale from 1 to 7, easy to hard. In Table 6, mean reported difficulty is listed for each story topic. No significant differences were found using analysis of variance, possibly because of small samples, but it does appear that international and national news are perceived as more difficult, while sports appears easiest to read. These findings national news are perceived as more difficult, while sports appears easiest to read. These findings are consistent with previous research (Danielson, 1964; Stempel, 1981).

Story evaluation did not differ by gender or age, except for a predictable preference shown by men for sports stories. T-tests showed that men found that sports stories, in both the original and simplified versions, were significantly more interesting, easier to read, and easier to talk about. Men also were more likely to say they would buy the paper in which the sports story appeared. Regardless of Fog indexes, men and women had gave less positive evaluations of their interest in the sports stories--further evidence that topic, not readability is governs reader response.

Frequency of readership was another variable that accounted for some differences in reader response. Infrequent readers, people who reported reading the paper up to three days a week, were less interested in all topics than were frequent readers--those who reported reading four to seven days each week. T-test results shown in Table 7 show that infrequent readers indicated significantly less interest in topics and less perceived ease of telling about the stories.

This tendency of infrequent readers to respond more negatively has interesting implications. Perhaps regular readers are a self-selected group of people who are, at the outset of reading, interested and motivated. But infrequent readers, lacking initial interest, may also lack other positive feelings about reading the newspaper. The finding that infrequent readers have a lower level of interest supports the argument that interest may be a prerequisite for positive response to news copy.

Certainly, to appeal to the broadest possible audience, newspapers need to steer clear of difficult prose. But the present study suggests that clear writing alone will not recruit readers. For newspapers to stay in business, more is involved than simply simplifying newspaper language.

judgements are not made independent of one another, a process described by McDaniel (1973) in a study of broadcast news credibility. McDaniel suggests that "...an audience's judgment of interest, intimacy and credibility are not independent; heightened interest seems to be accompanied by increased credibility, and so on" (p.149). Readability, however, is excluded from the net of positive reaction found in the present study.

When Fog indexes were invented, readers had few options--for the most part, if they wanted news, they had to read it, and it had to be simply written to adequately serve the reading public. But today's news audience has many options and many demands on time and attention that did not even exist 40 years ago. Motivation to read newspapers may no longer be assumed, so that the host of positive affect that comes with interest has new importance in today's market.

Because of changing attitudes toward newspapers, readability needs to be redefined. Old definitions of readability, such as that rendered in the Fog index, assume a degree of commitment on the part of the reader that no longer exists. Simplicity will remain a hallmark of good writing, but it can no longer suffice as a motivation for readers.

In most cases today, newspaper news still is written and presented as if the readers lack alternatives. More attention needs to be given to making story topics clear and interesting from the outset of a news story. To be perceived as readable--which means buyable, according to the results of this study--newspapers must offer readers news that is intriguing and they must present it in ways that makes its value and relevance immediately clear.

New definitions of readability need to take into account the uniqueness, immediacy and impact of the news. New measures need never to forget the reader, as older measures did by concentrating only on news texts.

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The advantages of broadcast media to semi-literate Americans appear to be overwhelming. Perhaps more than most, people with poor reading skills need to get information easily and quickly. One can listen to the radio or watch TV while performing a host of other activities, such as working at menial jobs. If newspapers could offer news to semi-literate people that they would find necessary and appealing, then the task of reading might feel satisfying and worthwhile. Newspapers may continue to fail to reach less literate audiences unless news content is compellingly interesting and relevant--and is viewed as a necessity of everyday living.

Researchers have found that the processes of writing and reading change the nature and quality of thinking (Luria, 1981; Scribner and Cole, 1981). One can only imagine the long-term social effects of a public that does not read newspapers--or perhaps that reads very little of anything. In fighting declining readership, newspapers face a challenge far beyond merely being more readable. Newspapers must be interesting enough to hold readers.

This challenge to print journalism must be met in the newsroom, in the classroom and in the research lab. New ways of thinking about and constructing news lie ahead for newspapers that will prosper in the coming years. Undeniably, newspapers do many things far better than other media. These special services must be isolated, and newspapers must capitalize on them. Finding ways to keep readers reading will be the challenge of newspapering in the 21st century.

Table 1. Fog indexes for original and edited versions of experimental stories.

| Story topic | Original | Edited |
|---|---|---|
| Sports | 18.7<br>n=33 | 8.3<br>n=31 |
| State news | 14.4<br>n=28 | 8.7<br>n=33 |
| Editorial | 13.0<br>n=37 | 7.0<br>n=35 |
| Local news | 11.2<br>n=36 | 8.6<br>n=32 |
| International news | 22.8<br>n=33 | 8.6<br>n=29 |
| National news | 19.6<br>n=30 | 8.7<br>n=33 |
| Feature | 10.0<br>n=30 | 7.4<br>n=25 |

Table 2. Pearson correlations: Satisfaction variables with Fog indexes and with interest in story topic.

| Variable | Pearson correlation with | |
|---|---|---|
| | Fog index<br>N=445 | Interest in topic<br>N=445 |
| Clear writing | .09 | .49** |
| Reading ease | .08 | .43** |
| Fairness | .00 | .21** |
| Satisfactory length | .14* | .31** |
| Easy to talk about | .16* | .37** |
| Informed reporter | .12* | .29** |
| Unbiased reporter | .02 | .03 |
| Skilled reporter | .02 | .36** |
| Understood story well | .04 | .46** |
| Wanted to keep reading | .05 | .54** |
| From accurate newspaper | .01 | .31** |
| From careful newspaper | .02 | .31** |
| A newspaper I would buy | .02 | .44** |

* significant at p<.05.
** significant at p<.001.

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Table 3. Pearson correlation coefficients for study variables.

| | Fog | Ease | Interest | Clear | Fair | Length | Tell | Inform | Bias | Skill | Comp | Stop | Accurate | Careful | Buy |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Ease | .08 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Interest | .05 | .43** | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Clear | .09 | .74** | .49** | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Fair | -.01 | .26** | .21** | .23** | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Length | .15* | .27** | .31** | .25** | .13* | | | | | | | | | | |
| Tell | .17** | .60** | .37** | .59** | .19** | .23** | | | | | | | | | |
| Inform | -.12* | .41** | .29** | .41** | .22** | .14* | .35** | | | | | | | | |
| Bias | -.02 | -.03 | -.03 | -.04 | -.49** | -.03 | -.09 | -.13* | | | | | | | |
| Skill | -.02 | .45** | .36** | .56** | .20** | .23** | .37** | .48** | -.05 | | | | | | |
| Comp | .04 | .64** | .46** | .62** | .23** | .22** | .66** | .41** | -.07 | .43** | | | | | |
| Stop | .06 | .45** | .54** | .52** | .19** | .37** | .45** | .37 | -.11 | .48** | .55** | | | | |
| Accurate | -.01 | .37** | .31** | .40** | .38** | .13* | .33** | .56** | -.12 | .46** | .42** | .39** | | | |
| Careful | .02 | .41** | .31** | .48** | .34** | .15* | .33** | .44** | -.10 | .54** | .40** | .41** | .76** | | |
| Buy | -.02 | .40** | .44** | .48** | .28** | .28** | .36** | .41** | -.13* | .53** | .43** | .54** | .55** | .62** | |
| Age | .10 | .02 | -.09 | .01 | .10 | .09 | .00 | -.04 | .03 | .01 | .01 | -.07 | .03 | .07 | .05 |

* significant at p∠ .01
** significant at p∠.001

N=403

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Table 4. Results of regression analysis of all evaluation variables with two dependent variables.

With "a paper I would buy" dependent:

R square = .51
N=403

| Variables in the equation | Beta | T | Significance |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. From a careful newspaper | .40 | 9.3 | .000 |
| 2. Wanted to keep reading | .23 | 4.9 | .000 |
| 3. Skilled reporter | .16 | 3.5 | .000 |
| 4. Interest in story topic | .13 | 3.1 | .002 |

With Interest in story topic dependent:

R square = .38
N=403

| Variables in the equation | Beta | T | Significance |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Wanted to keep reading | .32 | 6.1 | .000 |
| 2. Clear writing | .23 | 4.9 | .000 |
| 3. A newspaper I would buy | .12 | 2.4 | .016 |
| 4. Satisfactory length | .14 | 2.3 | .022 |

Table 5. Means for selected reader satisfaction variables for readers of original and edited stories.

| Variable | Original (hard-to-read) n=225 | Edited (easy-to-read) n=217 |
|---|---|---|
| Interest in topic | 3.60 | 3.60 |
| Clear writing | 3.45 | 3.48 |
| Easy to talk about | 3.28 | 3.48 |
| A newspaper I would buy | 4.12 | 4.06 |
| Easy to read | 3.10 | 3.20 |

Table 6. Reported ease of reading for original and edited stories.

| Story topic | Original | Edited |
|---|---|---|
| Sports | 3.1<br>n=33 | 2.6<br>n=31 |
| State news | 2.7<br>n=28 | 2.6<br>n=33 |
| Editorial | 3.0<br>n=37 | 3.4<br>n=35 |
| Local news | 3.4<br>n=36 | 3.2<br>n=32 |
| International news | 4.2<br>n=33 | 4.1<br>n=29 |
| National news | 3.6<br>n=30 | 3.9<br>n=33 |
| Feature | 2.2<br>n=30 | 3.4<br>n=25 |

Table 7. Mean ratings for selected reader satisfaction variables by high and low newspaper readership groups.

| Variable | High use (4-7 days) n=215 | Low use (0-3 days) n=193 |
|---|---|---|
| Interest in topic * | 3.4 | 3.7 |
| Clear writing | 3.5 | 3.4 |
| Easy to talk about * | 3.0 | 3.5 |
| A newspaper I would buy | 3.9 | 4.2 |
| Easy to read | 3.1 | 3.2 |

* t-test significant at p<.05.

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# Yount humble, as usual, over third MVP award

MILWAUKEE (AP) — Robin Yount's 16 years with the Milwaukee Brewers have been quiet but effective. He's a hitter and a leader, not a talker.

It was no surprise, then, that he said little on Monday when he won his second American League Most Valuable Player award. Being humble and consistent have long been his trademarks.

"I appreciate the award and thank the baseball writers for their votes," the publicity-shy Yount said. He was vacationing in Hawaii.

"It's always nice to be recognized, but I want everyone to realize that this award is also for my teammates, the organization and the great fans of Wisconsin."

Those great fans of Wisconsin got a jolt earlier this month when Yount filed for free agent status. That would let him seek offers from other teams.

What would the Brewers be without Yount? He broke in as a long-haired, 18-year-old shortstop in 1974. He led the team to the World Series in 1982 when he won his first MVP award.

Yount was never one to make a fuss. But he hinted at the end of last season that he wanted to return to the Brewers only if the team made some changes aimed at winning another pennant.

At age 34, playing in another World Series is Yount's one remaining goal, not 3,000 hits and not awards. He led the major leagues in hits for the '80s with 1,731. He starts the '90s with 2,602 hits in his career. He also led baseball with 337 doubles in the 1980s.

"His accomplishments speak for themselves. But I don't think individual awards mean anything to Robin," Brewers manager Tom Trebelhorn said.

"What means most to him is the fact he can play this game at the high level that he sets for himself and at a level that will help the ball club win. He puts everything in a team perspective."

Yount is the Brewers' centerfielder. He joined Stan Musial and Hank Greenberg as players to be MVPs at two positions. Hw also became the first AL winner to play for a team that didn't have a winning record. The Brewers were 81-81 in 1989.

Greenberg with Detroit and Musial with the St. Louis Cardinals won their MVP awards as first basemen and outfielders.

Yount switched to the outfield in 1985 because of shoulder problems. He is the second Brewer to win the MVP award. Reliever Rollie Fingers won in 1981.

Yount batted .318, hit 21 homers, drove in 103 runs and scored 101 this season. He had 38 doubles, 9 triples, 19 stolen bases and committed only seven errors.

"He's the guy we look to to carry the ball club," teammate Greg Brock said. "Without his bat and his leadership, we're hurting."

Jim Gantner said last week that he expects Yount to be back in Milwaukee. He is one of Yount's closest friends on the team. He added that California is one of several teams believed to want him.

"My gut feeling is he'd like to come back," Gantner said. "Milwaukee is still No. 1 with him. I haven't talked with him lately, but that's the way I think he feels.

"I don't think money is the top priority. He won't go to another team just for the big bucks. I know that for a fact."

Yount received eight first-place votes and 256 points. He was the only player named on all 28 ballots by members of the Baseball Writers' Association of America.

Texas' Ruben Sierra was second with six first-place votes and 228 points. He batted .306 with 29 home runs and a league-leading 119 RBIs. His team finished fourth — as did Milwaukee.

Baltimore's Cal Ripken was third with six first-place votes and 216 points. He hit .257 with 21 homers and 93 RBIs in helping the Orioles challenge for the AL East title.

George Bell, like Ripken a former MVP, finished fourth with four first-place votes and 205 points. He batted .297 with 18 home runs and 104 RBIs for AL East champion Toronto.

Dennis Eckersley, who finished fifth with 116 points, and Carney Lansford, who wound up 17th, received the other first-place votes. Both play for the World Series champion Oakland Athletics.

**Journalism 600 Study of Newspapers and Readers**
University of Maryland at College Park
Winter 1990

After you read the attached news article, please rate it on the following scales. Circle the number of your rating for each pair of adjectives.

Interesting topic--------------------------------------------------Uninteresting topic
1 [✓ 2] 3 4 5 6 7

Clear----------------------------------------------------------------Confusing
1 2 3 4 [✓ 5] 6 7

Easy to read---------------------------------------------------------Hard to read
1 [✓ 2] 3 4 5 6 7

Unbiased-------------------------------------------------------------Biased
1 2 3 [✓ 4] 5 6 7

Too short------------------------------------------------------------Too long
1 2 3 4 [✓ 5] 6 7

How easy would it be for you to tell a friend about the content of this article?

Easy-----------------------------------------------------------------Difficult
1 2 [✓ 3] 4 5 6 7

How would you rate the writer of the article?

Informed-------------------------------------------------------------Uninformed
1 2 [✓ 3] 4 5 6 7

Biased---------------------------------------------------------------Unbiased
1 2 [✓ 3] 4 5 6 7

A skilled writer-----------------------------------------------------A weak writer
1 2 3 4 [✓ 5] 6 7

(over please)

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How well did you understand the article the first time you read it?

Completely--------------------------------------------------------------Not at all
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

At what point in the article did you want to stop reading?

At the end--------------------------------------------------------At the beginning
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Imagine a newspaper in which this article appeared, and rate that imaginary newspaper on the following scales.

Accurate--------------------------------------------------------------Not accurate
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Careful-----------------------------------------------------------------------Careless
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

I would buy it--------------------------------------------------I would not buy it
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Please add any further comments you have on this news article.______________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________

Where do you get most of your news?____________________________

How many days a week do you usually read a newspaper?________________

What is the name of the newspaper you read most frequently?______________________

What are your two favorite sections of the newspaper? 1.___________________
2.___________________

What is your occupation?______________ Your sex: Male____ Female____

Your age group: teens____
twenties____
thirties____
forties____
fifties____
sixty or over____

Thank you for your participation.

# COUNTRY AND NOSTALGIA: SPACE AND TIME IN MAGAZINE JOURNALISM

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# COUNTRY AND NOSTALGIA:
# SPACE AND TIME IN MAGAZINE JOURNALISM

## Abstract

The American magazine industry has created a market niche using "country" themes. These publications draw their editorial focus variously on nostalgia, small-town intimacy, traditional gender roles and patriotism. This development in journalism suggests an important contradiction in American cultural thought, specifically a confusion between country and nostalgia, or space and time. This paper suggests the discovery of "country" in magazine journalism depicts an ideological crisis. It has been described previously by Raymond Williams as the tension between city and country. The idealization of the rural community suggests the importance of the ritualized, interpersonal relationships. It also depicts a retreat from the deeply-embedded ideology of "progress" and its foundation of religious or mythological belief. This paper looks closely at one exemplar magazine, *Country America*, and analyzes how it uses three symbolic oppositions to depict this country renaissance: (a) fame and obscurity; (b) wealth and poverty; and (c) courage and hopelessness. The popular rise of such magazines in the 1990s is compared to the development a century ago when Americans discovered the benefits of country and nature. However, the ironic turn in the contemporary rise of country in magazine journalism is the realization that it is cultivated through the sponsorship of corporate America, which is typically falls on the opposite side of country ideals.

# COUNTRY AND NOSTALGIA:
# SPACE AND TIME IN MAGAZINE JOURNALISM

Scattered among the titles on the supermarket magazine racks are numerous new publications which promote nostalgia for Victorian and pastoral values, a kind of American country renaissance. The preponderance of such magazines define their themes around an idealized rural life, but are rooted in deep contradictions of cultural thought.

As a whole, country magazines look at life through what James Carey has called "the flattened perceptual glasses of common sense."[1] Such nostalgia is an exquisite inversion of the ideas of progress and modernity. Nostalgia is the ideological twin of progress and, together, they hold much in common. As Christopher Lasch described the relationship: "For those nourished on the gospel of progress, idealization of the past appears to exhaust the alternatives to a tiresome and increasingly unconvincing idealization of the future."[2]

This complex of ideas is also connected to, and dependent on, religion. The belief in the sacred and mythology made possible the idea of time, history, development and either progress or regress. Robert Nisbet in *The History of the Idea of Progress* connects the abandonment of the sacred in the realm of knowledge to a loss of faith in reason and its disciplines. Enlightenment philosophers held that reason could replace the sacred and preserve the movement of society into its utopian future. Since at least the 17th Century, democracy was the embodiment of public reason. The declining faith in politics is symptomatic of the disillusioned sacred in American thought.[3] The obfuscation between nostalgia and country, history and geography, is further evidence of cultural confusion over time and space. It was described by Carey in the overlap of transportation and ritual models of communication.

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[1] James Carey, *Communication as Culture: Essays on Media and Society*, Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989, p. 66.

[2] Christopher Lasch, *The True and Only Heaven*, New York: W.W. Norton, 1991, p. 32.

[3] Robert Nisbet, *History of the Idea of Progress*, New York: Basic, 1980.

As ritual expressions, country magazines project familial and small-town intimacy, thrift, patriotism, traditional gender roles, and agrarian economics. While these themes challenge urbanization at the surface, they challenge even more subtly the secularization of society. The cultural crisis is distinctly religious. The reversal of the gears of history back to a distinctly moral, religious community was avowed by Peter Berger to be "a goal as close to the impossible as anything in the realm of history."[4]

To restate the central problem posed by the discovery of country in magazine journalism: it is not as much a geographical as it is an ideological crisis, a product of mind. The nostaglic past is lodged in in the traditional tension between city and country and is played out in contemporary magazines as just another "taste culture," but only with the assistance of corporate sponsorship. It approaches what Daniel Boorstin's described in *The Image* as planned cultural meaning, or a pseudo image.[5] Nostalgia is an authentic, if perhaps misdirected, impulse which fulfills a need for post-modern identity.

## America's Country Roots

Country was appropriated before, a century ago, when Americans discovered the limits of the Western frontier and turned to what Josiah Royce called the "inner wilderness" for new cultural horizons. Within one period of 15 months shortly after 1900, there were 142 books published on outdoor topics with brisk sales reported for nearly all of them.[6] This new interest in pastoral themes arose as a response to the deep uncertainties of urban growth and social disorientation.

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[4] Peter Berger, "Social Sources of Secularization," in Anexander, J.C. and Seidman, S. Eds., *Culture and Society: Contemporary Debates*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 241.

[5] Daniel Boorstin, *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America*, New York: Harper & Row, 1964.

In spite of a profound faith placed in the potential of the American press by social philosophers before the dawn of the 20th Century, the appearance of newspapers and periodicals in American cities was not always given to "understanding, embracing and building an ethos of urbanism."[7] In the last third of the 19th Century the mass circulation periodicals enjoyed rising popularity due to a converging of cultural trends, technologies and economics, but not necessarily community.[8] These publications were not subject to any special insight into the chaos of the modern city. As described by communication historian David Nord, city newspapers were essentially "private in outlook, thoroughly individualistic in editorial policy and news philosophy."[9] In fact, it was not a failing of the media; the contours of the city were difficult to define. *The Growth of Cities in the Nineteenth Century,* Adna Weber sought a statistical foundation for the new definition of "city." The old definitions assumed a stable relation between city and nature, town and country; but the modern migration had radically disrupted those relations. "It is not altogether easy to define the distinguishing characteristics of a city," said Weber.[10]

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[6] *Country Life*, Nov. 1901, p. 25.

[7] Nord, p. 411.

[8] See, for example, Frank Luther Mott, "The Magazine Revolution and Popular Ideas in the Nineties," *American Antiquarian Society*, April 1954, pp. 195-214.

[9] Nord, p. 412.

[10] Weber, 1899, p. 11.

An important change occurred in journalism in the late 19th Century, moving away from the nostalgia for the communal European village and toward a particularly American communitarian identity based more on social interdependence than competitive individualism.

Voices began to be heard about the danger of urban life, the challenge of moral depravity and the loss of individual identity. City dwellers could become:

> Parts of a machine fitting snugly into their little places and moving there with hardly a thought of what their life means; making of custom a slavery; bowing in craven fealty to a boss, to a business, a sect, an order, a party, any sort of fashionable convention, with never a sentiment of devotion to any burning truth or any grand cause and with scarcely any recognition of those responsibilities which give to life its dignity and splendor. Many great human qualities come to their best in a life of comparative isolation.[11]

In *Walden, Moby Dick* and *Huckleberry Finn*, the principle character withdraws from society toward nature. The Garden, Nature, or Wilderness, became a metaphorical link for the mind to find its own self, stripped of artificiality. "In the wilderness only essentials count," wrote Leo Marx[12], but the trip there can only make sense because it is temporary and a person must inevitably confront society again to make sense of wilderness and vice versa.

With an ambivalent sense of the human conquest of nature, people began to catch a glimpse of the limits of human encroachment on the natural world. Some analysts found its roots in the act of radical separation of the individual from the social and cultural world. It is in the act of separation, or more precisely the "acts" of separation, which determines the sort of individual. "If human beings do not find it possible to separate themselves from their involvements with others and to take a stand of their own toward their lives there can be no individuals," said Michael Weinstein.[13]

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[11] G.S. Dickerman, "The Drift to the Cities," *Atlantic Monthly*, 112, September 1913, p. 353.
[12] Ibid, p. 69.

It was just such a period of social disorganization that occurred a century ago, and repeats itself today, according to Carey--a period of disorganization marked by the breakdown of habits, customs, manners and institutions. It is this evaporation Carey places in historical context: "...it is a temporary phenomenon, like swings in the business cycle. Eventually, the massive facticity of society reasserts itself, institutions reimpose themselves, a new social order is brought out of temporary social chaos."[14]

With the benefit of historical insight by Carey, we can see more clearly the parallels between today's nostalgia and a century past.

As early as the 1890s, it occurred to many people in antebellum America that nature offered important lessons for civilization. Urbanization became a pressing and depressing reality. A century later, the recreation of the pastoralism is strikingly similar.

Henry Childs Merwin wrote in 1897: "Closeness to nature...is wholesome and important to mankind; nay, it is so important that without it the human race could not long exist. The city...must continually be recruited from the country."[15] In 1991, *Victoria* magazine confesses, "The country habit has me by the heart."[16]

Evidence of the shifting public perspective toward nature appeared in the popular mass circulation magazines as early as the 1880s. One of the leading voices speaking about country was *Forest and Stream* magazine edited by George Bird Grinnell. *Forest and Stream* became the advocate for a vast assortment of nature projects through its network of correspondents and letter writers. In 1991, a magazine like *Countryside* promotes something it calls "The Dream Team," a loose collection of environmentally active organizations and people: "One thing all of them have in common in a membership dedicated to the notion that saving America's countryside is a crucial endeavor."[17]

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[13] Michael Weinstein, *The Wilderness and the City*, Amherst: Univ. of Massachusetts Press, 1982, p. 2.

[14] Carey, 1989, p. 266.

[15] Henry Childs Merwin, "On Being Civilized Too Much," *Atlantic Monthly*, June 1897, p. 838.

[16] *Victoria*, April 1991, cover page.

The ideology of *Forest and Stream* was pointedly anti-urban. A writer describing a 1901 heat wave in Chicago lamented how the summer heat often caused people to seek desperate solutions. Such discomfort often lead to the "usual consequences...deaths, prostrations, suicides." Seeking an otherwise reasonable solution to a well publicized death, the writer suggested it would have been better "had the suicidee gone fishing instead of commiting suicide." The suggestion may not have been offered entirely seriously, but the writer was struggling to express a profound ideological value given birth in the Gilded Age: "Big cities were never meant as a living place for humanity, and the fact that they are such is simply one of those perversions not sanctioned by nature"[18].

A contemporary parallel occurs in *Backwoods Home Magazine*, whose editor Dave Duffy writes: "Those who spend 40 years at a secure job they hate in a congested city they hate are secure with their pay check, their health insurance, their social security retirement benefits, their unemployment benefits should they need them, etc., but they still remain a slave to a job they hate...."[19]

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[17] "Making a Difference: The Green Team," *Countryside*, Spring 1991, p. 49.
[18] *Forest & Stream*, July 6, 1901, p. 10.
[19] "Letters," *Backwoods Home Magazine*, March/April 1991, p. 65.

Charles W. Eliot, writing in *National Geographic* at the beginning of the new century ascribed the new interest in naturalism to the exploitative trends which were unleased by industrialization, an age which showed "the evils which attend the growth of modern cities and the factory system are too great for the human body to endure."[20] He argued that a sense of nature was lost to the multitudes in the cities. It was necessary to return nature to people's lives "to cultivate healthy tastes and interests, to acquire just ideals of pleasantness and beauty, and to learn the value toward tranquil happiness...."

In 1991, *Country Journal* describes the the course of the lives of students from a small Wisconsin high school during the decade of the 1980s. She found a longing for simpler times, mingled with their environmental consciousness:

> I love getting out and smelling the woods. I'm concerned about logging. Old stands of trees that have been here for hundreds of years are just skinned off until there's nothing left.... I wish they'd stop to consider how bad it looks and how long it will take to replace those trees. I had special trees I played around as a kid that were as big around as a table. When I returned recently, there were only stumps left of trees that were 5 feet across."[21]

The social reform movement in the 1890s and evolutionary naturalism found a way to accommodate each other in different cultural channels. Subsequently, the interest in naturalism and conservation rose meteorically.

## Country Therapy

Among traditional magazines, pastoral nostalgia was reified in the time-bound folklore and wisdom of *The Farmer's Almanac*. It combined the practical advice of farm gossip with the fantasy of astrology. Later, *The*

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[20] Charles W. Eliot, "The Need of Conserving the Beauty and Freedom of Nature in Modern Life," *National Geographic*, 26, July 1914, p. 676.

[21] Diane Koos Gentry, "First Richland Center, Then the World," *Country Journal*, "April 1991, p. 63.

*Mother Earth News* updated the formula by adding a twist of 1960's consciousness and eclecticism. In soliciting contributions, the editors of *Mother Earth* stipulate they are particularly interested "what real people are doing to take charge of their own lives."[22]

The contemporary generation of magazines has carefully cultivated and divided its growing audience with increasingly finer market distinctions. Continuing the almanac tradition is *Country Almanac*, cultivating an encyclopedic approach to knowledge from windsocks to barn owls. Others have carved out niches among up-scale suburban commuters and urban refugees (*Countryside*), weekend lodging (*Country Inns*); down-home decorating (*Country Accents, Country Victorian*), cooking and gardening (*Harrowsmith Country Life*), ecologism and survivalism (*Backwoods Home Magazine*).

On a somewhat different plane, *Victoria* combines a soft photographic focus with light literary themes to portray 19th Century values in a kinder, feminine light. It spreads lavish art layouts around an array of British and French verses with descriptors like "flowering," "penciling," "remembering," "glowing," "seafaring," etc. Local reading clubs meet to share thoughts about the most recent offerings in *Victoria*.

*Country Woman*, a Wisconsin publication, recently widened its audience niche from women on farms and ranches to "country women" in general. It describes its themes as diverse as the lives of rural women: love of home, family, farm, ranch, community, hobbies, enduring values, humor..."the lifestyle that surrounds country living."[23]

*Country Home*, published by Meredith Corp. in Des Moines, Iowa, inserts a centerfold "Country Gazette" which described itself as "a journal of country manners and methods." The editor wrote of readers' loyalty to the magazine, comparing it to students in her hometown high school band. "As a hometown, Proctor, Minnesota, wasn't much," she explained. "It did, however, have the best high school marching band in the state, if not the nation.... It was the sense of belonging that made everything not only worthwhile, but fun and exciting."[24]

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[22] *1989 Writer's Market*, Cincinnati: F & W Publications, 1988, p. 547.
[23] Ibid, p. 623.

Another Meredith Corp. publication, *Country America* was born in October 1989. Editor Danita Allen compared the magazine's inception to the birth of her third child, adding: "Proud as I am of this magazine--my children are the best thing I've ever done! I'm sure most of you would agree: Families are the most important thing we have!"[25]

Many of these publications are sold in suburban America, although the proportions vary. It is likely the country vision the middle class finds appealing is just that, a dream. There is a fatal irony, a pastoral paradox, in the most radical visions of this retreat to the country. If the crowds actually succumbed to the urge to flee to the country, they would do so only to discover their city neighbors moving in next door.

### Country Roots

Deep insights into the nostalgia and pastoral emerges in Raymond Williams' *The Country and the City* which explores the literary return to the rural past. A traditional and golden memory, Williams said, "keeps appearing, reappearing, at bewilderingly various dates: in practice as an idea, to some extent based in experience, against which contemporary change can be measured."[26] The nostalgic search for an idealized community finds "no place, no period in which we could seriously rest."[27] The process of looking back has its own logic, resulting in the resurrection of many old cultural forms and practices, old ways of feeling.

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[24] "Loyalty," *Country Home*, April 1991, p. 13.

[25] All subsequent references are to *Country America*, Oct. 1990; the editor's column appeared on p. 8.

Williams argues there is little inherently good or bad about either the country or the city. The transformation from rural to urban society changes social ideals through the division and complexity of labor, material products and altered relations between social classes. However, what is knowable is not just a function of objects, it is also a function of subjects, observers, of "what is desired and what needs to be known".[28] Thus, Williams understood the reality of the country ideal is in the observer's position toward it, a position which is part of the community perspective. What this means, then, is "country" represents not the traditional past, nor even the rural present, but the direct, personal relationships which disappear in the city environment.

To illustrate, we turn to the pages of the new magazines. A North Carolina urban refugee wrote recently in *Countryside* about the reasons she fled New York City to resettle in a rural community:

> Bruised and battered by the urban crush as I was, I did not retreat because of fear. Sure, New York was corrupt and dangerous. I courted disaster each time I walked the dog. But physical terror had less to do with it than the emotional horror of losing my humanity. Bit by bit it slipped away....[29]

She recognized the dehumanization of ignoring the homeless and other destitute urban victims. Yet, she found all was not golden in the rural community. Drunkenness and problems of rural illiteracy were apparent, but so was openness and honesty. Even what might be described as rural idiocy at its worst was better than urban anonymity.[30]

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[26] Ibid.

[27] Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City*, London: Chatto and Windus, 1973, p. 35.

[28] Ibid, p. 165.

[29] Barbara Howar, "Of Mules and Men South of the Mason-Dixon Line," *Countryside*, Spring 1991, p. 4.

Such problems are often described in the difference between country and city in a matter of scale; the community of the country village is more visible and connected: "...a knowable community, within country life as anywhere else, is still a matter of consciousness, and of continuing as well as day-to-day experience," explained Williams.[31]

It would be simple, perhaps, to suggest the nostalgia for country begins and ends here, but it does not. The need for human connections on a scale which makes them possible in community must merge with a relevant technology. Magazines fit the circumstances because they permit what Robert Park delineated as the "expressive" function of communication which could modify the disintegrating force of American competition. In Daniel Czitrom's description: "Park argued that [communication] could in the long run ease the resultant social tensions by bringing greater intimacy and understanding and by substituting a moral order for a biotic one...."[32]

The intersection of ideology and technology is not neutral space. The central problem is how any particular technology changes the form of community in which experience is apprehended and expressed. The printed page, even a pastoral page, is not an ideal site for a country community, but it will do as an ideological village.

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[30] "Rural idiocy" is a phrase used by Marx and Engels, but which Raymond Williams found problematic. Williams clarified it as: "The persistence of certain established mystifications, superstitions, deferences or political abdications, the lack of exposure to the liberating community of other kinds of settlement...." in Raymond Williams, *Politics and Letters--Interviews With New Left Review*, London: Verso, 1981, p. 319.

[31] Williams, 1973, p. 166.

[32] Daniel Czitrom, *Media and the American Mind: From Morse to McLuhan*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, p.118,

Another problem traditionally encountered by country is its questionable status among the intelligentsia. Carey has outlined how the rural was always held to be either barren or romantic by the intellectual elite. He wrote:

> The image of the American small town, the country town, as a seat of unrelieved bigotry, Babbitry, and philistinism, a site of class conflict and exploitation, is an achieved image and an unquestioned one at that. The attach on the small town was a necessary part of...the Progressive movement.[33]

The attack on the rural credo as a primitive relic of the past was a necessary part of American nation building. The destruction of the country "community" was hardly deliberate, but it was the inevitable and desired result of technological progress. It was woven into the electrical and technological sublime, the conquering of time and space. The rise of communication services, advertising and marketing, transportation and national politics all contributed to the suppression of the agrarian lifestyle.

We should recognize this wave of nostalgia is neither a new nor entirely unique theme in American culture. The petit bourgeoisie which has been close to a country life have always been a hidden presence. Their interests were largely suppressed by the dominant urban cultural centers precisely because they were outside the center. What the literati and intelligentsia failed to achieve, and what contemporary magazines are rediscovering, is the capacity of technology itself to coalesce into a "community of discourse." As outlined by historian David Hollinger, this approach unites both people and communities with varying degrees of commitment to coherence and rationality:

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[33] James Carey, "Communication and the Progressives," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, 6(1989), 276.

> Discourse is a social as well as an intellectual activity; it entails interaction between minds, and it revolves around something possessed in common. Participants in any given discourse are bound to share certain values, beliefs, perceptions and concepts--"ideas"....[34]

Accepting the premise of shared discourse as the basis of community opens intellectual and social thought to new insights. From the traditions of Tonnies, Durkheim and Weber, modernization was presumed to be the march of progress from the traditional past to a modern present, of the passing of "community" and the development of impersonal, contractual and mechanistic modes of association.[35] These philosophical roots are questioned, if only in the pages of the contemporary magazine industry.

## True Believers

To further examine the implications of the popularity of the pastoral, we will examine *Country America* as a exemplar. It first appeared on the market in 1989 and quickly became the fastest growing magazine of Meredith Corp. Its readership grew 50 percent, from 400 to 600 thousand, in one year, carving a profitable niche in a business which is often characterized by high financial risk and fierce competition. The editors of *Country America* attribute the magazine's success to readers and advertisers alike who "strongly believe in country ways and in the people who enjoy the richness of country life."[36]

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[34] David A. Hollinger, "Historians and the Discourse of Intellectuals," in J. Higham and P.K. Conkin, Eds., *New Directions in American Intellectual History*, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1977, 42-63.

[35] Roland Warren, *The Community in America*, Chicago, 1972, p. 36.

[36] "Readership profile," *Country America*, Meredith Publishing Corp., p. 76.

*Country America* was designed around the rising popularity in country music through The Nashville Network (TNN), one of many splintered enterprises created by the cable TV industry .[37] TNN's broadcast schedule is published monthly to provide a commercial niche for the magazine.

Music remains the dominant theme in *Country America* but appears to be a transparent instrument to penetrate the values of the country world. The magazine's advertising and editorial features extoll many threads of the rural culture, from mail-order advertising for country handicraft materials, videotapes of "The Beverly Hillbillies," to hunting rifles and pick-up trucks.

Readership research for *Country America* affirmed that 75 percent of its charter subscribers were female, 72 percent were married, but with few children living at home. The median age is 52 years; a majority--60 percent--with a high school education or less. A psychographic profile described readers as "down-to-earth, neighborly, hard-working and family-oriented."[38]

## Symbolic Oppositions

Traces of corporate sponsorship of country is not the only surprising contradiction which emerges in contemporary pastoral publications.

*Country America* , which is produced for an audience drawn to the combined country music and pastoral lifestyle, engages a series of symbolic oppositions in its publication. In the combining and overlapping of cultural forms, there is an ambiguity which tends to confuse rather than illumines the problems of contemporary culture. In *Country America*, these oppositions are the juxtaposition of fame and obscurity, wealth and poverty, and courage and hopelessness. These oppositions perform what Toennies saw in the basic, instinctive, organic tendency which drives human activity from behind and dominates the lives of peasants, artisans and other "common" people, especially young people and women.

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[37] A cover letter from Deaton Research Services of Des Moines, Iowa, accompanied a survey questionnaire in June 1988 which said: "We are conducting an important survey for a company that is considering the creation of a new magazine for people like you and me--fans of country music and The Nashville Network." Those who were not fans of country music were asked to return the questionnaire uncompleted.

[38] Readership Profile, p. 72.

### *Fame and Obscurity*

Singer, Marty Stuart, is described in the magazine through terms which define his dedication to "true" country fashions: "I started wearing the decorated, bolero-style jackets with bluejeans instead of matching pants--everybody else had been wearing complete suits. I wanted to have fun with it," explains Stuart. The magazine suggests there is a nearly transcendental power in his elaborate clothes. "They transform...turn me into a hillbilly singer. When I...put on these clothes, I can almost feel something coming together."[39] What comes together, in his words, is the mythic creation of a country star who achieves the country dream of capital wealth while strumming and singing, a utopian fantasy.

Elsewhere in *Country America*, the "Sweethearts" are portrayed as two singers who maintain a devotion to designing and sewing their own elaborate Indian/Southwest-style costumes as part of their on-stage performing image. These women admit they are pleased with their rise to fame, but express impatience with the unfairness of male performers who seldom shave or apply make-up in order to enhance their masculinity.

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[39] *Ibid.*, p. 25.

Recognizing the preponderance of women in the country music audiences, the Sweethearts reveal this insight into the sexual roles they epitomize:

> "Sex appeal is certainly a part of what we do--but there's a twist to it. We have found that most of our crowd is female...so we have to appeal to them in different ways. They have to be able to identify with us. We're wives; we're mothers. I've got two daughters. But I can get up there and have sex appeal. I think that's good. I think it's a real positive image for women...."[40]

Whether it is positive, or merely functionally correct for the nostalgic look back, is ambiguous here.

*Wealth and Poverty*

Not surprisingly, the central concept of *Country America* appeals primarily to the working class and, more particularly, to women.[41] Likewise, a subtle, but compelling, orientation to wealth--or lack of it--emerges both in magazine perspectives about money as a means to success of celebrities and as a personal lifestyle issue. The last-page feature called "Country Corner" featured a comedy team named the Geezinslaw Brothers. Four of the eight jokes they offered dealt with attempts to borrow money from friends or relatives, gambling, or the unmanageably high cost of living. The juxtaposition of the reality of rural poverty, however strained the comedy routines, and the conspicuous if unstated wealth of musicians and singers is a striking contrast. Such a lifestyle seems to appeal to a sense of the working-class experience, personal relationships and maintenance of strong self-approving images.

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[40] *Country America*, p. 23.

[41] Mary Bufwack and Bob Oermann, "Women in Country Music," in Buhle, Paul, *Popular Culture in America*, Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1987, pp. 91-101.

In a particularly provocative image, country singer Dwight Yoakam struck a pose wearing contradictory clothing styles blending high and rural fashions in a bizarre, almost post-modern, class contrast. Yoakam was dressed in an ornate Western-style turquoise jacket, spotted with rhinestones, and topped with a large cowboy hat and bolo tie. The tails of his white shirt were not tucked in and his faded blue jeans feature a large, tattered hole over the right knee. A fashion designer's advice to Yoakam: "There's nothing wrong with what you wear. I think the split in the knee is perfect. Let's get you a beautiful jacket, and you'll look fantastic."[42] The layers of fashion, both high and low, speak directly to the contradictory images of wealth and poverty in the magazine.

*Courage and Hopelessness*

The core values of the country in *Country America* celebrate obligation, charity, an openness to the destitute and needy, in contrast to the realism of the present chaos. A young rock climber who lost his feet to frostbite in a climbing mishap was described in *Country America* as an example of this obligation. The climber was a victim of an unexpectedly severe blizzard, a natural event, which caught him and a friend high on a mountain. He returned to climbing even after his feet were amputated, adapting to his artificial feet. Through extraordinary courage, he overcame the tragedy to return to the mountains, a place where he best felt a sense of his individuality and satisfaction. For readers, the consequence is a sense of ambivalence between the climber's courage and the hopelessness of losing his feet.

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[42] *Ibid.*, p. 29.

### *Other Themes*

Both men and women celebrities appear on the magazine's cover, but there seems to be a particular appeal to a women's perspective. Performers are profiled in special features in terms of their lifestyles, fashions and interests. Women are typically portrayed in traditional sex roles. However, editorial interest is often oriented to revealing their *real* personalities, always drawing reader attention to the practical and earthy country dimensions of performer's lives away from the lights and stage.

The magazine promotes numerous departments which mesh with its ideological purposes: "Notes to Live By" with practical lessons for living found in country music lyrics, a kind of rural psychology; "A Day in the Life Of" which extolls "hard-working people who keep America running"; "My Hometown" with descriptions of small communities, their values and traditions"; and Country Doctor," with practical medical advice on chicken soup and other folk remedies to cure common ailments.

Whether it sacrifices its success to a kind of cult irrationality, cannot easily be defined. There is a persistent fear that readers can be led to substitute their ambitions for those of thinly disguised country celebrities whose images are engineered to appeal to the country ethic. The naive image of *country* is cultivated through superficial appeals to family, thrift and common sense, only to be tapped, finally, for its profitability.

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### Summary

The appearance of nostalgia on the magazine stands is not a novel development in American journalism. America's disaffection with urban disorder has emerged in the particulars of community and communication. There is, however, some doubt about the authenticity of a pastoral community under corporate guidance. On the other hand, we begin to see how these same fractures also afflict nostalgia's mirror-image, progress, and the crisis of modernity.

The new country magazines are a point of entry into the broader dialogue about communication and community . The nostalgic looks back to a past of rewards which have expired, a disillusionment with urban sophistication and an idealization of the simple pleasures of pastoral life. These images are located in the region of mind which services a temporal life, but the consequences are unavoidably ideological.

* * *

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# Images and Descriptions: A Semiotic Analysis of Specialty Fashion Catalogs for Non-Standard Women.

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# Abstract

This paper provides an analysis of the ways in which one major U.S. clothing manufacturer represents nonstandard sized women in its mail order fashion catalogs, that is those women who fall outside the standard range of clothing sizes available in standard catalogs. Following Barthes analysis of the fashion system as composed of two parts--the image clothing and the descriptive clothing--we analyze both the verbal and visual elements of the fashions presented in catalogs aimed at women who are Petite, Tall or Larger Sized, as defined by the fashion industry.

Our findings indicate that through their use of visual and verbal codes, J.C. Penney (and other clothing manufacturers) create three clear sub-categories of women based on their physical characteristics. We conclude that although Penneys ostensibly provides a valuable service to women who do not fit into the accepted industry standard size ranges, in reality they perpetuate social stereotypes by prescribing stereotypical social roles for women based on their physical characteristics.

"The body is a *problem* because to recognize it fully would be to recognize it as the foundation of economic life; how we use and organize the capacities of our bodies is how we produce and reproduce life itself."

R. Dyer

Although the specifics have varied over the years, most cultures have a notion of what constitutes the ideal female body. The ideal functions as a standard by which all other women are measured. The ideal body type effectively functions as a prototype. This ideal body form is never more clearly portrayed than in advertisements for clothing to adorn the body. Yanni (1990) notes that:

> One of the strategies of advertising is to present a readily recognizable symbol, *condensed codes of characterization*. Because of the history of the objectification of women, the symbol of *Woman* is easily manageable (p. 77, emphasis in the original).

Women's fashions, in particular, use this ideal body size as a yard stick from which clothes sizes are developed. The available sizes of clothes in the United States follow the normative statistical curve; that is, 68% of the population is deemed to fall within the first standard deviation from the norm--five feet three inches to five feet seven inches in height and between clothing sizes six and twelve. A problem of "manageability" occurs, however, when advertisers acknowledge the presence of women who do not reflect the ideal image, that is, whose bodies are not a "readily recognized symbol" for the prototypical woman. By statistical probability, thirteen percent of the population-- at either side of the norm--is placed within the second deviation. Thus, twenty six percent of all women are either: a) taller than the standard measure-- five feet eight and above; b) smaller in height and/or stature--five feet three and below ; and c) larger in height and stature--sizes sixteen to thirty two. The consequence of establishing a *normal* size range--that is those who fall within the first deviation--is that those women not included within the normative sixty eight percent are categorized as in some way *deviant*.

While there is a significant amount of research devoted to analyzing the ways in which advertisers depict gender ideology, (see for example, Barrett, 1985; Kervin, 1990) very little research has examined advertisements aimed at women who fall into the second deviation, that is who are taller, larger or smaller than the average. Those researchers who have addressed the case of the nonstandard woman often fall into the trap of accepting the dominant cultural ideal image and attempting to help women adhere more closely to the prescribed standards.. As an item in our local newspaper stated: "In American society there is little women won't do if the result is looking taller, thinner and sexier. So what's a little pain" (Idahonian/Daily News, March 26, 1991). Thus, while some researchers recognize that being larger than average is a problem only in relation to a cultural ideal or norm, others advocate ways in which clothing can help a woman appear more "desirable." Roach and Eicher (1973) note that some women who are "the wrong height" may find suggestions to "correct" their images in some fashion books. In a similar vein, Rudofsky (1972) calls obesity a "body deformation," as well as a secondary sexual characteristic for women in some societies.

Taking a more directly political stance, Bourdieu (1984) views attitudes toward body types as one aspect of a culture's judgement of taste:

> The body is the most indisputable materialization of class taste, which it manifests in several ways. It does this first in seemingly most natural features of the body, the dimensions (volume, height, weight) and shapes (round or square, stiff or supple, straight or curved) of its visible forms, which express in countless ways a whole relation to the body, i.e. a way of treating it, caring for it, feeding it, maintaining it, which reveals the deepest dispositions of the habitus...and also, of course, through the uses of the body in work and leisure which are bound up with them, that the class distribution of bodily properties is determined (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 190).

Similarly, Fiske (1989) draws a clear parallel between the practices of the fashion industry and the health industry, and the exercise of social and cultural standards:

> Clothing, cosmetics, slimming, jogging are all means of incarnating rules and intextuating the body. The relationship between the body beautiful and the body ugly, between the healthy and the unhealthy, the well and the badly dressed, the groomed and the unkempt, the muscular and flabby are social relationships of norms and deviations, and therefore political relationships aimed at naturalizing in the body the norms of those with most power in social formation. The meanings of health are social and not physical, the meanings of beauty are political and are therefore discourses for the exercise of social power (p. 92).

Methods of coping with aberrations from the societal ideal (Roach & Eicher, 1973; Rudofsky, 1972) range from intentionally reshaping the body mechanically--using corsets, bustles, or platform shoes; artificially--using plastic surgery, binding of feet or flattening of body parts; or by dieting to add or subtract bulk or use of body sculpting by weight lifting and exercise. Less dramatically, women (in particular) use clothing to "improve upon nature" (Kaiser, 1985) by using color and line combinations to call attention to certain body parts while diverting attention from others. This "disguising" of the body (Roach & Eicher, 1973) helps to create the illusion of the ideal body, altering the appearance of the body to more closely approximate the societal norm and therefore appear more attractive.

Research in the fields of nonverbal communication and social psychology, in particular, has demonstrated conclusively that our body image has a significant impact on the way we perceive ourselves and the ways in which others perceive us. Kaiser (1985) uses Pervin's (1978) categories of the self to demonstrate the relationship between body image and clothing. Pervin (1978) distinguished three dimensions to the self: a) the phenomenal or bodily self; b) the representation of self or our self-concept; and c) the presentation of self. The phenomenal self represents our perceptions of our bodies and the affective aspects of those perceptions. Pervin includes within this dimension the somatic or bodily self which plays a significant role in our choice of clothing styles. The representation of self or our self concept is a reflection of the cognitive measures we apply to ourselves. Our self concept is, to a great extend formed by the information we receive about ourselves from others. Clothing influences our self concept in terms of the part it plays in socialization, identity formation, social feedback and self-expression. The presentation of self reflects the behavioral aspects linked with how we manage the impressions that we present to others, including our choice of clothing (Kaiser, 1985, p.59).

In recent years, the clothing and fashion industries have recognized the economic potential of catering to "nonstandard women" and a flood of specialty clothing chains and mail order catalogs have appeared on the marketing scene. Clothing is now readily available to women who fall outside of the standard size ranges determined by the fashion industry. Kaiser (1985) views this trend in the fashion industry as a positive move:

> The apparel industry appears to be overcoming some of the somatypes that historically have prevailed. The increased response to market segments with special size needs could be due to a realization of profit potential, and/or to a social trend toward increased acceptance of physical differences (p. 79).

We argue, however, that a close examination of the fashions available to "non-standard" sized women, and the ways in which those fashions are displayed to the consumer perpetuates stereotypes of physical attractiveness and competence which impact the self on all three dimensions outlined above.

Rather than examining print advertisements for non-standard sized fashions in general, we chose to analyze the clothing presented in mail order catalogs because they take the form of advertisements and constitute a complete fashion system (Barthes, 1983). Clothing catalogs provide clear information concerning images the manufacturer wishes to project to their target audience, that is the women seeking to purchase clothes in a specific category. The presentation of clothes in the mail order catalogues takes the form of print advertisements, similar to those found in any "women's" magazine. Kervin (1990) observes insightfully, that:

> Because advertising aims at a particular market, "speaking to" certain consumers in certain ways, advertisements can be analyzed for how an audience is constructed, what assumptions are made about that group, which techniques and arguments are believed to appeal to it. Advertising can therefore provide clues to the social definitions of various groups, hints about the situation of an audience in society (p. 55).

Moreover, mail order catalogues were selected for analysis because they present the reader/viewer with what Roland Barthes (1983) has called "the fashion system" in its entirety. Following Barthes, therefore, our analysis is of both the "image" fashion as shown in the photographs of the models and clothing, and the "described" or written account of the fashion being portrayed.

Barthes (1983) argues convincingly that the fashion system is an economical system; one whose existence is determined by commercial demands, not by physical necessity.

He asks:

> Why does fashion utter clothing so abundantly? Why does it interpose, between the object and its user, such a luxury of words (not to mention images), such a network of meaning? (p. xi).

In answer to his own question, Barthes concludes that the continuation of the fashion system is predicated on maintaining an *ignorant* consumer:

> The reason is, of course, an economic one. Calculating industrial society is obliged to form customers who don't calculate; if clothing's producers and consumers had the same consciousness, clothing would be bought (and produced) only at the very slow rate of its dilapidation; Fashion, like all fashions, depends on a disparity of two consciousnesses, each foreign to the other. In order to blunt the buyer's calculating consciousness, a veil must be drawn around the object--a veil of images, of reasons, of meanings (Barthes, 1983, p. xi).

The answer to Barthes question, however, is not only economic, but cultural and political. Considering the role of the image produced by advertisements, Miles (1985) argues that:

> A person's self-image, values, and longings are shaped by the visual objects in her or his habitual attention...all of us to some degree...are addicted to the publicly available images with which we live (p. 45).

Taking Miles' analysis further, Yanni (1990) argues that "goods" (for example clothing) are:

> Communicators of meaning, [moreover] the structure of representation is built upon the relationship between the observer and the producer of images on the grounds of social meaning (pp. 71-72).

For advertisers, gender functions as a "meta-meaning system" (Kervin, 1990, p. 54). In other words, it functions as a meta-code which influences the choices made by advertisers. These choices include the strategic use of: a) aesthetic codes such as lighting and color; b) fashion codes; c) nonverbal codes such as facial expressions and body stance; and d) codes indicating social roles such as who is depicted as active or passive (Kervin, 1990, p. 54). Kervin develops a strong argument for the use of specific codes which indicate gender ideology. Our thesis is that codes operate in a similar manner so as to reflect an ideology of body types. We hypothesize that those women who are seen as taller than average are depicted in a strikingly different manner than those women who are smaller than the norm, and that those women who are larger (as distinct from merely taller) are presented in yet another way. Moreover, we hypothesize that the messages conveyed through the catalogs/advertisements, both in terms of the written clothing and the image clothing (Barthes, 1983) are consistent with stereotypical social roles ascribed to women who are outside the "ideal form."

## Methodology

The focus of this paper is on exploring the way one major department store and clothing manufacturer--J.C. Penney-- serves and represents the fashions designed for those women who fall within what we have labelled the second deviation. We selected J.C. Penney because it is a nation-wide chain which markets clothes in both standard and non-standard sized lines. Penney's clothes are aimed at a middle-class audience, their styles are fairly conservative and the prices are moderate. Penney's, therefore, aims at a general audience, rather than at a clientele for the very low priced or exclusive designer clothing. In addition because Penney's catalog is available at its national chain of stores we can control for regional variations in fashions.

We have examined, as a case study, J.C. Penney's mail order catalogues for non-standard sized women for Spring/Summer and Fall/Winter 1990, and Spring/Summer 1991. We examined the gestalt presented in each catalog, then subjected every third model to a more detailed analysis. Following Barthes (1983) definition of the fashion system as both image clothing (the visual depiction), and written clothing (the verbal description which accompanies the image), we have analyzed both forms of text.

In mail order fashion catalogs, the two aspects of the fashion system operate as two sides inextricably linked in a single phenomenon. The visual image is iconic and is translated into a representational image by the use of written language. Barthes (1983) identifies three functions of the written text: a) an authority function which imposes a particular reading of the visual image on the reader/viewer; b) a knowledge function, language presenting information which photography delivers more ambiguously; and c) an emphatic function by stressing certain parts of the visual image while downplaying or ignoring other (pp. 13-14).

Consequently, we have analyzed the combined impact of the image and written clothing presented in the nine J.C. Penney catalogs which constitute our data. The image clothing was content analyzed to show the common visual elements contained within each fashion photograph, and the photographic representations of the three size categories were compared. The written fashion was also content analyzed and the words used to described the clothing designed for each specialty catalog was compared. Finally, the image and written aspects of the fashion system presented in the J.C. Penney catalogs were compared and contrasted.

## Analysis

While each catalog is different on its face, similarities run through each J.C. Penney catalog designed for women in all three size ranges.

### Image clothing

#### Background images and composition.

The most striking feature of the Petite and Talls catalogs, compared to the Large Size catalog, is the absence of visual data as a background. (See Table 1). A full 86.5% of all photographs analyzed in the Tall catalogs show an amorphous background--one that shows no definition of walls. floors, or distinguishable features of any kind. Another 6.1% are clearly set in interior locations, but the specific setting is not identifiable. The photographic backgrounds used in the Petites' catalogs are also heavily amorphous, the Spring/Summer 1990 catalog in particular, uses photographs showing only fluted columns against a pale pink wash, or silver columns against an off-white ground.

Tall women are not placed in any social context, and often extend physically off the page, with tops of heads cropped and feet similarly missing. (See photograph 1). All settings within the Tall catalogs are spare, sterile and free from clutter of any kind. Props are usually only a chair or table, typically wood, but also sleek metal couches. The message appears to be that these models, and by extension the consumer (Berger, 1972), are not limited by any context or social convention.

The Petites catalogs depict a significant percentage (23.5%) of models surrounded by walls or fences, as opposed to 0% in both Talls and Larger-sized catalogs. Many other shots show the Petite models beside large trees, exterior columns, or lamp posts, often leaning against them. Only 8% of the shots are recognizable as to location, either a beach scene or on a street, and only two of the 82 photos were interior shots. It is the presence of barriers, for example fences, walls, pillars, etc., that seem to limit the Petite woman. (See photograph 2). Petites, when shown against an amorphous background, are shown significantly smaller on the page than the Tall models. While the average height of the Tall model on the page is 11 inches (of the 11.5 available) the average Petite photograph shows the model using only about nine inches of the page. (See photograph 3). When a setting is used, the models are often shown in public, often in groups around large buildings. 73% of the Petite catalog photos analyzed have more than one model in them, usually two (54% See Table 2)

The Large Size catalogs, however, are very different. Not only are the average number of photographs per page higher (see Table 2), but the descriptions are usually written in a white block place near the main photograph, as opposed to the more usual practice in the other two series of having the descriptions against the same background. (See photograph 4). The resulting *visual noise*--confusion and discord as a result of too many images on one page--is a startling contrast to the simplicity of the other catalogs.

Only 18% of the photographs in the Large Size catalog show an amorphous background. Taking all three Large Size catalogs as a whole, 24% of the photographs show the models placed in a garden setting, often with a profusion of colorful flowers that blend in with the clothing worn by the models. (See photograph 5). In contrast, almost the entire Fall/Winter catalog contains interior shots, obviously portraying a home.

Our prediction that women are being placed in stereotypical contexts determined by their size categories, appears to have validity.

Accompanying figures.

While nearly all of the photographs in the nine catalogs focus entirely on the female models who display the clothing available to the consumer, there are several exceptions which are noticeable because of their difference. Eight of the 266 photos analyzed show men in them. Two of these photographs show men who are attentive to the models. one, in the Talls catalog for Spring/Summer 1991, shows a woman sitting on a table with a man sitting behind her, leaning into her and intently looking into her face. (See Photograph 6). The other attentive male who appears in the nine catalogs portrays a much less intimate relationship with the female model. This image, depicted in the Large Size catalog for Spring 1991 shows a man leaning on a fence with the model on the other side. His back is to the camera and no expression can be seen on his face, but there is no physical contact between the two characters and no sense of intimacy.

All other shots including men appeared in the catalogs for Large Sized women and show men who are clearly inattentive to or ignorant of the women in the image. These photographs include a shot of two models posed in the setting of a marina. In the background is a man looking the other way through a pair of binoculars. (See Photograph 7). Another photograph, shows a model at a swimming pool with a man behind her, looking beyond her with his arms crossed and a look of disdain or boredom on his face. No men are in any of the three Petite catalogs examined.

The presence or absence of men included in these depictions of women's fashions is significant if placed in the context of societal expectations and stereotypes. In his analysis of art history, Berger (1972) concluded that a man's presence in art work is:

> Dependant upon the promise of power which he embodies. If the presence is large and credible his presence is striking. If it is small or incredible, he is found to have little presence....A man's presence suggests that he is capable of doing to or for you (p. 45).

Moreover, Berger noted a direct relationship between the quality of the male presence and the promised power available. The Tall women are depicted with men who are attentive in their presence, and at the other extreme, the Petite models are always shown without a male presence.

The inattentive nature of the men who are placed in the fashion photographs of Large Sized women is reminiscent of a technique used by certain photographers which has been closely analyzed by feminist critics. For example, Mary Ann Doane (1990) provides a critical analysis of Robert Doisneau's photograph *Un Regard Oblique* in which a middle aged couple are shown looking in the window of an artists gallery. The wife is scrutinizing a painting (which the audience cannot see) the husband, on the other hand, is smiling at the painting of a naked young woman displayed clearly so that the audience and the man can see it. The wife is shown as unaware that her husband's attention is thus diverted. The photographs of women in the Larger Size catalogs are composed in a similar manner, so that the reader/viewer is aware of the presence of a man looking away from the models at something ostensibly more interesting, but the models apparently are unaware.

In contrast, the overly attentive men in the catalogs aimed at Tall women are part of a photographic composition much analyzed by feminist critics (for example, Mulvey, 1990; Modeleski, 1990). Mulvey (1990) describes what she regards as a style of looking which embodies a society characterized by sexual imbalance:

> Pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its fantasy onto the female figure, which is styled accordingly. In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so they can be said to connote to-be-looked-at-ness (p. 33).

While Mulvey's conclusions are formed on the basis of narrative cinema, the similarity of certain photographs in the Talls catalog to classic "Boudoir" photography and the poses assumed by the supporting men combine to present a very different image of the women in that category compared to those in the Petite or Larger Size groups.

### Touch.

Another factor which varied significantly in the catalogs aimed at the three size categories was the role of touch--both self-touch and the contact made with the other model in the photographic image. Morris (1977) stated that the way one touches oneself is a mimicry of being touched by someone else. He refers to such touches as "self-intimacies":

> Self-intimacies can be defined as movements that provide comfort because they are unconsciously mimed acts of being touched by someone else. When we perform a self intimacy we use part of our body as if it belonged to a comforting companion. During our infancy our parents cuddle and hug us...They pat us, stroke us, and caress us, and make us feel safe and secure, loved and wanted. When we are adults we often feel insecure and in need of gentle loving, but the parental arms are no longer there to protect us. Our own arms are there, however, and we use them as substitutes (p. 102).

While women in all three size categories engage in self-intimacies to a certain degree, the models in the petite catalogs touched both themselves and the other model(s) in the photograph significantly more than did models in the other two categories. (See Tables 3 & 4). The gestalt image presented by the Petite models is one of "girlish charm" the clothing is often less sophisticated than in the other two size ranges and the women are often posed in a childish manner. (See photograph 8).

In addition to the higher frequency of touch behavior observed in the Petite catalogs, there is a quality of touch that distinguishes one size range from another. The Petite models typically touch themselves lightly with a finger, striking a tentative and demure pose. (See photograph 9). The Tall models however touch themselves confidently in ways which accentuate the curves of their bodies. (See photograph 10). The Large sized models more frequently touch themselves with both hands, sometimes with a clenched fist. (See photograph 11).

### Disguise elements.

The fashion industries tendency to use elements in clothing to accentuate or downplay certain aspects of a woman's figure was noticeable in the areas of accessories. While stripes and size of pattern did not vary significantly from one size range to another, the use of contrasting trim, buttons and in particular belts was very different in the Large Size catalogs than in the other two categories. (See Table 5).

## Described clothing

### Especially for talls.

Visually, the tall models are portrayed in a manner which suggests that they have no borders, no limits, no boundaries--there is an implication that this body type and size has no limits, but will be successful and appropriate everywhere. The text which accompanies the clothes available in the talls line compliments this visual message.

The text is characterized by words such as *rich, sensuous, savvy, fluid, polished, intricate* and *elegant*; all describe positive, sophisticated qualities. Textures often are of velvet or satin. There are frequent references to British hunting customs, for example, clothes are described as *imperial, crested* and *well bred*, the *cream of the crop.* A jacket is *Henly with a twist, go for the bold* jewelry is sold and clothing is designed for *making strides.* Another distinctive feature of the written text is the frequent references to men's fashion or styling. Many items of clothing are described as *tailored* or *menswear inspired.* In combination with the poses struck by the models, the image presented in the talls catalog is one of androgyny. (See Table 6).

### Especially for petites.

Petites are often presented with clothes that make them appear childlike, delicate, or fragile, and are described as *classic, traditional, fashionable, basic, dressy, or soft.* Thus, clothes in the petites' catalog have *Victorian lace collars*, present *refreshing...revisions of timeless silhouettes* and are *simply perfect.* Much of the text is devoted to explaining the proper place to wear the clothes, whether it is the office, for casual wear, or after five. The language is simple and direct, and avoids words that have an earthy connotation. Similarly, the clothes themselves are described in technical detail with attention paid to the type of collar or pocket or seam. (See Table 6).

### Fashions in larger sizes.

The Large Size catalog shows women who are confident, independent, friendly, and beautiful. Unlike the talls, who have no context, the Large woman is seen in the spring/summer catalog outside (usually on a patio or in a landscaped garden), and in the fall/winter catalog in the house. The language used to describe clothes worn by these women includes sensual words like *lush, rich, opulent, fluid, flared, swirl*, and *supple.* Thus, for the larger sized women: *Autumn colors take on soft shapes*, *hit a* *fashion note* or contain *finishing touches that fit your style*.

In direct contrast to the words, however, are the clothes themselves. They are generally much less expensive, with more polyester and less velvet or satin than in the other catalogs. There is also a greater emphasis on versatility and appropriateness: A dress is *an all over compliment*, or can *go anywhere anytime*, while another is sure to *carry you through your days and into your evenings in confidence*.

Cross-catalog comparisons.

Within the texts, language is used to portray the women and the clothes in each subcategory in a strikingly different manner. While very few items of clothing are common to all three catalogs, those few have such different descriptions and are depicted so differently that it is hard to recognize them as the same piece of clothing.

For example, the spring/summer 1990 catalog shows a shirtwaist dress in all catalogs. In the Talls catalog, the description is straightforward. This dress "...goes almost anywhere. Notched collar; front button closure to elasticized waist." The Petite's version of the dress is a full page spread that uses the description to explain why one would buy the dress. "The classic look and finely tailored details tell you why it's so popular. Button front shirt styling features notched lapels... Elasticized waist opens skirt to an easy flare." In the Large Size catalog,

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the dress is available in pastel colors instead of the richer, more trendy colors. This one features "...A wide, flattering shirt collar and buttons to the waist for easy access..." The words take the form of a reassurance.

In the fall/winter catalogs there are two dresses that appear in all sizes. The text for talls says the "Trapeze jacket counterbalances the chemise...The jacket drapes longer in back." Petites are told this dress will "bring fashion savvy to the office..The spice (rust) trapeze has cape styling that lets the jacket hang longer in back than in the front." Large sizes are informed that it is "A must for fall...Jacket features...a cascade hem. The mock turtleneck dress flatters with a lean, straight silhouette..."

Many of the clothes in the Tall catalogs are also in the petite catalogs. A dress described in the Talls as "romantically adorned with sweetheart neckline and flowing style that's sure to flatter" has a "button placket extending from dropped waist to hem..." That same dress, as described for petites, is a "Spring inspired dress featur[ing] sweetheart neckline and puffed sleeves... Fitted, set-in drop waist opens to a gently gathered, full skirt." One is sexy, with buttons from neckline to hem, the other is puffy and gentle, with no mention made of the buttons up the front.

In many cases, the text emphasizes bodice details in talls, but not in petites. Moreover, descriptions for clothing in the petites catalog omit textual, sensual details, or use language that is naive and overly simplified. For example, a sweater for talls is described as having a "nubby texture...Appliqued flowers on front are accented with gold-tone threading and beads." The identical sweater for petites is "a bonus for office dressing or casual wear, Pretty floral appliques of pink satin and lace play against gold tone threads on our white acrylic knit sweater."

In the fall/winter catalog a similar sweater gets the same treatment. "Intarsia sweater knits together **tantalizing** textures, **modern** design...loosly stitched, **swirled** with lace and embroidered rose appliques **strewn** with faux pearls." Its petite counterpart is an "Interesting intarsia sweater **play**[ing] appliques of lace with simulated pearls against **neutral** tones" (emphasis added).

In a similar vein, what is described for petites as "The Essential White Blouse" is called a "treasure Chest" for talls. What is "bold, feminine and quite flattering" for petites will "take the hard edge off business dressing" for talls. A "Well bred jacket, meticulously tailored " with a "Chesterfield collar" for talls, is a "Tailored wool plaid blazer (with) timeless fashion appeal (and) a notched collar" when worn by petites.

One clear distinction between the text used in the talls catalog and that found in the petites is the explicit use of sexual innuendos in the description of clothes for tall women. "Elegance in **one easy piece**" describes a jumpsuit for talls. It features a "Satin **platter** collar, french cuffs (and the) legs taper slightly." For petites the same garment is a "**classically cut** jumpsuit. The satin **Peter Pan** collar...adds just enough dash to a **simple** silhouette" (emphasis added). *One easy piece on a satin platter* has a very different connotation from a *classically cut Peter Pan*, who swore never to grow up.

The large sized catalog takes an entirely different focus. Inexpensive separates are described as featuring "true-to-size cut in two way woven polyester. Clothes 'give' while retaining their shape." Emphasis is often placed on features that draw attention to size; a non-roll waistband, elasticized waists, "stirrup pants with just the right amount of spandex added for stretch and shape retention." There are several "megashirts" offered, although similar shirts in the petite and tall catalog make no such claim.

Petites clothing often presents visual and textual oxymorons. One outfit is billed as "serious fun." Another shows a military style jumpsuit made from soft knits. The spring/summer 1990 catalog, for example, shows a military style suit, either khaki or navy cotton with gold buttons being worn by a giggling girl. The skirt is all ruffles and the cropped jacket has "a pretty little bow in back."

While "pretty little bows" are not often found in the large catalog, oxymorons are also present. Even the title of the catalog shows the difficulty the supplier has in finding names for the obvious. While the other catalogs are titled "**Especially** for Petites" or "**Especially** for Talls", this one is not especially **for** anyone. It is simply "**Fashions** in Large Sizes."

## Results

Both hypotheses were supported. Our preliminary analysis of mail order catalogs for nonstandard sized women indicates that the women in the three size categories distinguished are presented in a very different manner from each other. In addition the choices of fashion clothing available to these groups of women enhance and maintain those different images. Moreover, we found that the messages conveyed by this major clothing retailer are consistent with social stereotypes that confine women to particular roles on the basis of their body image.

## Conclusion

The prototype of a woman, according to the categories established by the fashion industry, is between a size six and a size fourteen;, she is five feet three inches to five feet seven inches tall. Women who fall outside these categories are placed in three primary subcategories: taller, larger or smaller. In his detailed exploration of the categorization process, Lakoff (1987) notes:

> Most categorization is automatic and unconscious, and if we become aware of it at all, it is only in problematic cases (p. 6).

The impetus behind the economic realities of the fashion industry is to provide special services for women in these subcategories, while at the same time not giving the appearance that the subcategories they have created are problematic. Framing his analysis from a perspective he calls experiential realism, Lakoff argues persuasively that the process of categorization not only serves an external organizing function, but has significant internal perceptual functions. Thus he concludes, "our bodily experience and the way we use imaginative mechanisms are central to how we construct categories to make sense of our experience" (Lakoff, 1987, p. xii). In the case of the fashion industry, the categories are created by the industry, but accepted by the customers.

For decades feminist critics have argued that "male" is perceived to be the standard, the norm, the criterion from which all other forms of life are defined. "Woman is *the Other*, derivative, secondary, an object against which male identity is formed" (Yanni, 1990, p. 73). By acknowledging variance in the shape and size of women's bodies, J.C. Penney and other clothing manufacturers have effectively taken the categorization process a step further. Women who fall outside the norm (for women) become **sub**-categories. The women in these subcategories are presented by Penney's as

social stereotypes. Lakoff (1987) notes that:

> Social stereotypes are cases of metonymy--where a subcategory has a socially recognized status as standing for the category as a whole, usually for the

> purpose of making quick judgements about people...It defines cultural expectations (p. 79).

Such stereotyping accounts for the similarities within the subcategories of petites, talls and larger sizes and also for the differences between the three groups. Women who fall within the standard size range and women who are taller than average are portrayed in a manner reminiscent of traditional glamor or boudoir photography texts. Women who are smaller than average are stereotyped as fragile and childish--they can have a career and leave the home but there are limits. Women who are larger than average are stereotyped as the warm, soft mother who is always portrayed in the home--their horizons are severely limited.

In the catalogs examined here, women who fall within the second deviation--especially those who are categorized as petite or of a larger size--possess what Bourdieu (1984) calls the "alienated body" (p. 207), one which is less valuable in a socio-economic and cultural sense than the standard form. Thus, although--as some feminist critics have observed--"Woman" is the "Other," some women are more *deviant* than others.

Mail order catalogs aimed at the second deviation serve a dual function in perpetuating social stereotypes associated with women's roles which are physically determined by their size. Advertising operates by creating a relationship between the observer and the producer of images, clarified by a written description. Moreover, that relationship is built on the grounds of social meaning

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(Yanni, 1990, p. 72). Yanni (1990) argues that in advertising:

> The substance of woman's being, the diversity of expression and experience, is condensed to physicality, displaced to the body, and symbolized as object (p. 77).

Although ostensibly proving a valuable service to women who do not fit into the prescribed standard size ranges by defining them as special and unique, J.C. Penney (and we suggest other clothing manufacturers) uses verbal and visual codes which produce sub-categories that perpetuate stereotypes based on an objectification of a woman's body. Such objectification and stereotyping serves to alienate a woman on the basis of her body type and to keep her in the roles prescribed.

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Table 1 Background settings of 266 photographs, by percentages

| | Petites | Talls | Large |
|---|---|---|---|
| Amorphous | 43.5 | 86.6 | 19.4 |
| Garden | 2.4 | 0 | 25.8 |
| Walled/fenced | 23.5 | 0 | 1.1 |
| Beach/Pool | 0 | 0 | 9.7 |
| Other Exterior | 28.2 | 0 | 7.5 |
| Interior home | 1.2 | 6.1 | 35.4 |
| Interior public | 1.2 | 0 | 1.1 |
| Other | 0 | 7.3 | 0 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 |

Table 2 Number of models grouped in photographs, by percentage.

| | Petites | Talls | Large |
|---|---|---|---|
| One | 27.1 | 47 | 59.6 |
| Two | 54.1 | 47 | 34.3 |
| Three | 12.9 | 6 | 4 |
| Four | 5.9 | 0 | 2 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 |

Table 3. Part of hand touching self.

| | Petites | Talls | Large |
|---|---|---|---|
| Full hand | 20 | 40.3 | 35.4 |
| Fingertips | 27.1 | 8.5 | 14.1 |
| Fist/wrist | 14.1 | 3.6 | 7.1 |
| None | 38.8 | 47.6 | 43.4 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 |

Table 4. Part of Model being touched by other model, by percent.

| | Petites | Talls | Large |
|---|---|---|---|
| Torso | 7 | 0 | 4 |
| Limb | 20 | 3.7 | 5 |
| None | 73 | 96.3 | 91 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 |

Table 5. Contrasting colors used as belts , trim and buttons on models, by percent.

| | Petites | Talls | Large |
|---|---|---|---|
| Belts: | | | |
| Self Fabric | 17.6 | 20.7 | 8.1 |
| Contrast | 25.9 | 28.1 | 9.1 |
| None | 56.5 | 51.2 | 82.8 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| Trim: | | | |
| Yes | 28.2 | 28.1 | 30.3 |
| No | 71.8 | 71.9 | 69.7 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| Buttons: | | | |
| Yes | 30.6 | 25.6 | 18.2 |
| No | 69.4 | 74.4 | 81.8 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 |

Table 6. Repetition of evaluative terms from all descriptions in all catalogs.

| Styles | Large | Tall | Petite |
|---|---|---|---|
| Basic | 5 | 3 | 10 |
| Classic | 22 | 13 | 30 |
| Military | 0 | 2 | 1 |
| Nautical | 5 | 6 | 9 |
| Menswear | 2 | 5 | 2 |
| Tailored | 9 | 17 | 15 |
| Ensemble | 8 | 3 | 11 |
| Coordinate | 8 | 8 | 19 |
| Appropriate Setting | | | |
| Career | 22 | 3 | 3 |
| Casual | 25 | 11 | 23 |
| Sporty | 4 | 2 | 8 |
| Colors | | | |
| Bold | 5 | 3 | 10 |
| Earthy | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| Rich | 8 | 14 | 7 |
| Subtle | 2 | 3 | 5 |
| Understated | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| Qualities | | | |
| Chic | 3 | 3 | 0 |
| Dainty | 3 | 0 | 1 |
| Delicate | 4 | 3 | 2 |
| Dramatic | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Easy | 25 | 30 | 35 |
| Elegant | 8 | 3 | 9 |
| Enhanced | 3 | 4 | 6 |
| Feminine | 9 | 11 | 18 |
| Fresh | 2 | 3 | 2 |
| Fun | 5 | 1 | 4 |
| Generous | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| Luxurious | 7 | 7 | 5 |
| Natural | 6 | 5 | 5 |
| Polished | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| Romantic | 0 | 5 | 4 |
| Sophisticated | 1 | 6 | 7 |
| Subtle | 2 | 3 | 5 |
| Understated | 3 | 2 | 1 |

|  | Large | Tall | Petite |
|---|---|---|---|
| Fabric |  |  |  |
| Crisp | 4 | 2 | 2 |
| Easy | 25 | 30 | 35 |
| Fluid | 7 | 4 | 24 |
| Decorative | 6 | 11 | 11 |
| Silky | 1 | 2 | 1 |
| Soft | 57 | 46 | 45 |
| Texture | 7 | 7 | 5 |
| Fit |  |  |  |
| Comfortable | 64 | 37 | 44 |
| Flattering | 22 | 25 | 19 |
| Oversized | 14 | 13 | 4 |
| relaxed | 11 | 17 | 13 |
| Roomy | 9 | 11 | 2 |
| Silhouette | 16 | 16 | 29 |
| Tailored | 9 | 17 | 15 |
| Versatile | 9 | 5 | 11 |

A
Jumpsuit
Also [illegible]
Ultra-Talls
Also [illegible]
Black

# Make raves with French Navy® casuals

**A** [illegible] jumpsuit is [illegible] for comfort [illegible] cotton and Lycra® spandex, fashioned into a flattering simple waist with inset cummerbund. Padded short dolman sleeves with button detail. Front pleats, side seam pockets. Back zipper closure. Straight legs. Machine wash, line dry. Made in U.S. Del. wt. 1.20 lbs. Colors: 01 pink; 82 black. State color number-and-name.

Tall Misses Sizes (5'8" to 5'11", inseam about 33"): S(6-8), M(10-12), L(14-16), XL(18-20). State S, M, L or XL.

EY 246-3719 D ...... 65.00

Ultra-Tall Misses Sizes (5'11½" to 6'2", inseam about 35"): M(10-12), L(14-16), XL(18-20). State M, L or XL.

EY 246-3727 D ...... 68.00

**B** Soft chambray camp shirt [illegible] and pleasing [illegible] pastel stripes. Laundered cotton is styled with point collar and button [illegible] pockets. Short sleeves can be rolled up. Back yoke with locker loop. Front button closure on hidden placket. Machine wash, tumble dry. Made in U.S. Del. wt. 0.50 lb. Colors: 01 pink/white; 34 blue/white. State color number-and-name.

Tall Misses Sizes: 8, 10, 12, 14, 16, 18, 20. State size.

EY 442-0311 D ...... 26.00

**C** Casual blue chambray skirt puts a premium on the essentials. Wide waistband has elasticized sides for a comfortable fit. Front button-and-zipper closure. Triangular belt loops, flattering front pleats and shirred back. Handy side slash pockets. Easy 100% laundered cotton. Machine wash, tumble dry. Made in U.S. Del. wt. 1.20 lbs.

Tall Misses Sizes (5'8" to 5'11", about 33" from your natural waist): 8, 10, 12, 14, 16, 18, 20. State size.

EY 443-0112 B ...... 30.00

Ultra-Tall Misses Sizes (5'11½" to 6'2", about 36" from your natural waist): 12, 14, 16, 18, 20, 22. State size.

EY 443-0120 B ...... 32.00

**D** With our blue chambray pants, leisure comes easy. Pull-on styling features multi-needle stitched elasticized waist with top gathers and mock front fly. Button-tab belt loops and slash pockets. Tapered legs. Laundered cotton. Machine wash, tumble dry. Made in U.S. Del. wt. 1.20 lbs.

Tall Misses Sizes (5'8½" to 5'11½", inseam about 32"): 8, 10, 12, 14, 16, 18, 20. State size.

EY 444-0251 B ...... 32.00

Ultra-Tall Misses Sizes (5'11½" to 6'2", inseam about 35"): 12, 14, 16, 18, 20, 22. State size.

EY 444-0269 B ...... 34.00

**E** Sporty leather belt with covered buckle and perforated detail. About 1¼" wide. Made in U.S. Del. wt. 0.50 lb. Colors: 54 tan; 78 white. State color number-and-name.

Waist Sizes: S(fits 24½-28"), M(27½-31), L(30½-34). State S, M or L. If your waist is at high end of measurement range, order the next larger size.

EY 101-1296 D ...... 15.00

Earrings sold on page 9.

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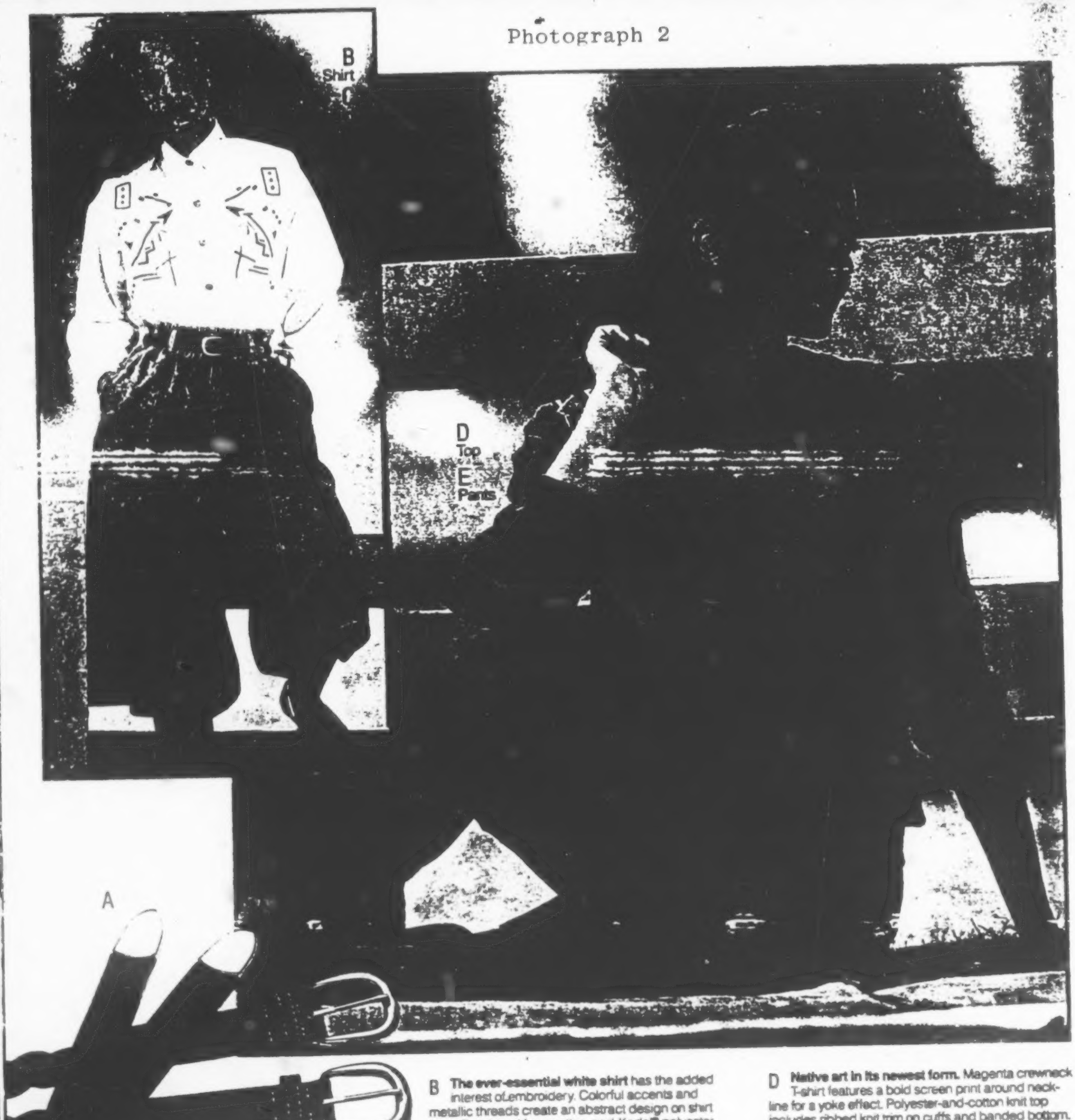
Photograph 2



A **Sporty 1-inch leather belt** in winter-required shades of cognac and black. Designed to pull together almost any casual ensemble. Genuine leather with smooth-and-braided design. Buckle and tip in antiqued silver-tone. Made in U.S.
Colors: 55 cognac; 82 black. State color number-and-name.
Waist Sizes: S(24½-28"), M(27½-31), L(30½-34).
State S, M or L.
SW 101-1568 D—Del. wt. 0.60 lb. ................15.00

B **The ever-essential white shirt** has the added interest of embroidery. Colorful accents and metallic threads create an abstract design on shirt front. Fashioned from cotton-and-Kodel® polyester broadcloth. Styled with gold-tone metal buttons, long cuffed-sleeves and shoulder pads for smooth fit. Machine wash, tumble dry. Made in U.S. Wt. 0.60 lb.
Petite Misses Sizes: 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14. State size.
SW 452-3825 B.................................34.00

C **Today's denim shaped into the sought-after split skirt.** Acid washed for a softer feel and proportioned to flatter petites. All-cotton style has side slant pockets and all-around elasticized waistband. Due to the unique acid wash process, color variations will occur in fabric. Machine wash, tumble dry. Made in U.S. Del. wt. 1 lb.
Petite Misses Sizes (inseam about 19" long): 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14. State size.
SW 453-1760 B.................................24.00

D **Native art in its newest form.** Magenta crewneck T-shirt features a bold screen print around neckline for a yoke effect. Polyester-and-cotton knit top includes ribbed knit trim on cuffs and banded bottom. Machine wash, tumble dry. Made in U.S. Wt. 0.60 lb.
Petite Misses Sizes: XS(4), S(6-8), M(10-12), L(14).
State XS, S, M or L.
SW 452-3858 B.................................26.00

E **Matching magenta pull-on pants** are styled with elasticized waistband, tapered legs and slash pockets. Comfortable in an easy, polyester-and-cotton knit. Machine wash, tumble dry. Made in U.S. Del. wt. 1 lb.
Petite Misses Sizes: 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14. State size
SW 454-1546 B.................................

*Of Course You Can Charge It!*

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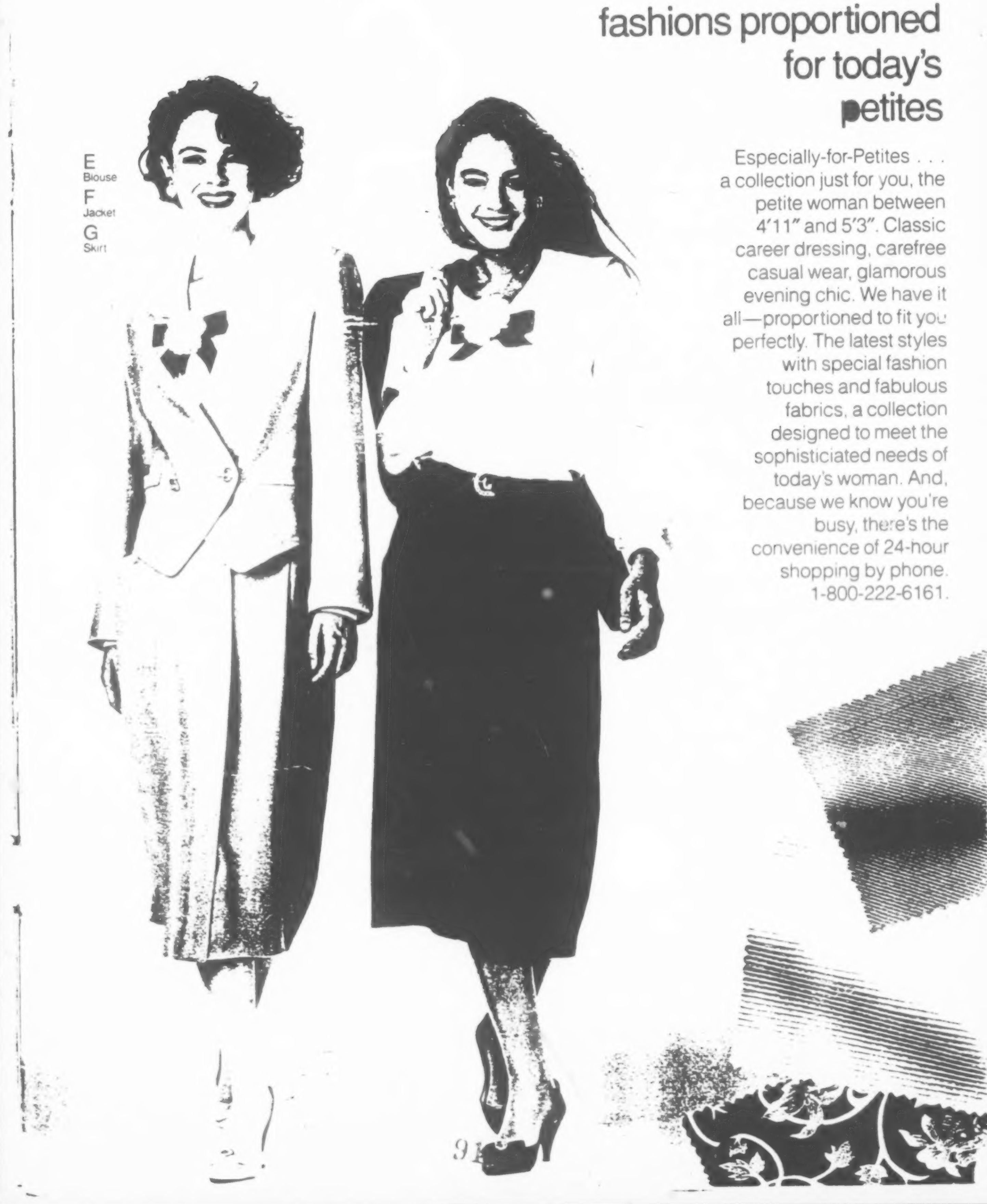
Photograph 3



E
Blouse
F
Jacket
G
Skirt

## fashions proportioned for today's petites

Especially-for-Petites . . . a collection just for you, the petite woman between 4′11″ and 5′3″. Classic career dressing, carefree casual wear, glamorous evening chic. We have it all—proportioned to fit you perfectly. The latest styles with special fashion touches and fabulous fabrics, a collection designed to meet the sophisticiated needs of today's woman. And, because we know you're busy, there's the convenience of 24-hour shopping by phone. 1-800-222-6161.

## Photograph 4

F
Shirt
G
Jacket
I
Shirt
H
Pants
J
City Shorts

**F Cream of the tops:** relaxed challis shirt gets detailed with tri-colored blanket stitching at collar, cuffs and button front. Dropped shoulders, shirttail hem; shoulder pads. Of woven rayon-and-polyester challis. Machine wash, tumble dry. Made in U.S. Del. wt. 0.90 lb.

Women's Sizes: 16W, 18W, 20W, 22W, 24W, 26W. State size

WX 492-9881 B .......... 30.00

**G The bomber jacket:** shaped with notch collar, shoulder pads and ¾-elasticized waist. Front button closure. Of woven cotton-and-polyester. Machine wash, tumble dry. Made in U.S. Del. wt. 1.25 lbs.

Women's Sizes: 16W, 18W, 20W, 22W, 24W, 26W. State size.

WX 492-9824 B .......... 35.00

**H to J Crisp, woven essentials for ensembling.** Coordinating pieces in solids and springtime florals, all of polyester/rayon/flax. Machine wash, line dry. Some made in U.S., some imported of domestic fabric.

Women's Sizes (5'3½"-5'7½"): 16W, 18W, 20W, 22W, 24W. State size.

**H Pleated floral trousers** have button-and-zipper fly front with elasticized backwaist; slash pockets; triple-front pleats. Straight legs, belt loops. Inseam about 29". Del. wt. 1 lb. State size above.
Colors: 96 print, 27 olive. State color number-name.

WX 494-7461 D .......... 35.00

**I Floral campshirt** has banded shirt collar, novelty button front and breast pocket. Shirttail hem. Del. wt. 0.70 lb. State size above.

WX 492-9857 B .......... 30.00

**J City shorts** have roomy legs and comfortable elasticized backwaist. Button-and-zipper fly front, slash pockets, belt loops. Del. wt. 0.70 lb.
State size above.
Colors: 27 olive; 96 print. State color number-name.

WX 494-7438 D .......... 25.00

**K Braided leather belt** with antiqued gold-tone metal buckle, tip and keeper. Approximately 1" wide. Imported from Mexico. Del. wt. 0.50 lb.
Colors: 53 honey; 78 white; 37 navy. State color number-and-name.

Waist Sizes: 1X(34-38"), 2X(37½-42"), 3X(41½-46"). State 1X, 2X or 3X—if your waist is at the high end of the measurement scale, order the next larger size.

WX 101-3127 D .......... 22.00

Earrings sold on pages 35 and 36.

*Of Course You Can Charge It!*
*See Page 45.*

K

nney 15

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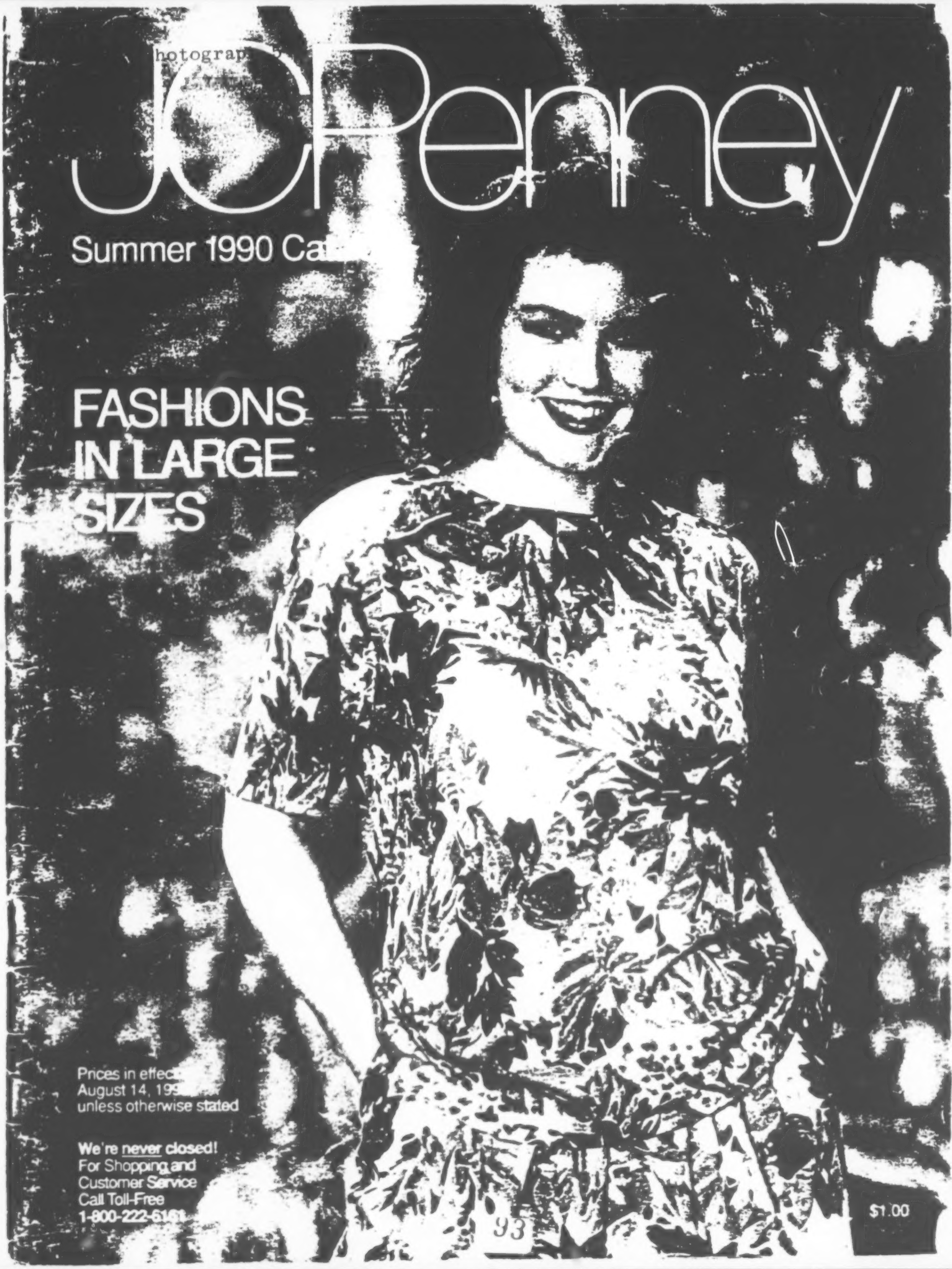

hotograp

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Summer 1990 Ca

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August 14, 199
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Photograph 6

From our cov
A
B
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C
Card
D
Pants
Also
Ultra-Talls
56
53
E
Belt

**A to D From our cover...Dividends® natural gift for knits.** Luxuriously soft all-cotton interlock separates that mix minimal lines with maximum color. An interchangeable collection of soft shapes that work because they're as sophisticated as they are simple. Machine wash, dry flat. Made in U.S.
Colors: 30 turquoise; 07 coral; 78 white. State color number-and-name.

**A Pullover shell** with pointelle crew neckline and short sleeves. Rib knit trims sleeves and bottom. See colors above.
Tall Misses Sizes: S(6-8), M(10-12), L(14-16), XL(18-20). State S, M, L or XL.
EY 441-0528 D—Del. wt. 1.4 30.00

**B Pull-on skirt** cut on the [illegible] and narrow. Elasticized waistband, rib knit trim. [illegible] colors above.
Tall Misses Sizes (about 28½" from your natural waist) S(6-8), M(10-12), L(14-16), XL(18-20). State S, M, L, XL.
EY 443-0047 D—Del. wt. 0.90 lb. 30.00

**C Button-front cardigan** adds the covering complement. Loose, relaxed body with shoulder pads, rib knit cuffs, banded bottom. See colors above.
Tall Misses Sizes (sleeve length about 32¼"): S(6-8), M(10-12), L(14-16), XL(18-20). State S, M, L or XL.
EY 441-0510 D—Del. wt. 1.70 lbs. 48.00

**D Pull-on pants** so perfect for weekends and casual outings. Waistband is elasticized and legs have softly ribbed banded cuffs. See colors above.
Tall Misses Sizes (5'7" to 5'11", inseam about 32")
S(6-8), M(10-12), L(14-16), XL(18-20).
State S, M, L or XL.
EY 444-0103 D—Del. wt. 1.70 lbs. 40.00
Ultra-Tall Misses Sizes (5'11½" to 6'2", inseam about 34"): M(10-12), L(14-16), XL(18-20). State M, L, XL.
EY 444-0350 D—Del. wt. 1.70 lb. 42.00

**E A belt designed** to pull together a variety of looks. All-leather style is 2" wide with top-stitching and wide leather keeper. For the layered look shown (or if you are at the higher end of size range) order next larger size than your regular belt size. Made in U.S.
Colors: 53 honey; 56 bone. State color number-and-name.
Sizes: S(fits waists 24½ to 28"), M(27½-31), L(30½-34). State S, M or L.
EY 101-1725 D—Del. wt. 0.50 lb. 15.00

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For Shopping and Customer Service
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Photograph 7

# Dockers®

**A Levi's® Dockers® cotton knit tee** gets energized with stripes. Easy pullover with dropped shoulders; ribbed trim at neck; straight hem. Embroidered signature logo. Of 100% cotton. Machine wash, tumble dry. Made in U.S. of imported fabric. Del. wt. 0.70 lb.
Colors: 03 poppy; 39 periwinkle; 37 navy; 57 khaki. State color number-and-name.

Women's Sizes: 1X(18W/20W), 2X(22W/24W), 3X(26W/28W). State 1X, 2X or 3X.

WX 492-8909 D ........................ 29.99

**B & C Ever-popular Levi's® Dockers® Spinnaker jeans and shorts:** basics you can't live without. Tailored with V-yoke; double front pleats; button-and-zipper fly front. Striped interfacing in waistband; side elasticized insets at waist. With front scoop pockets and classic watch pocket; topstitching detail; belt loops. Dockers® logo on back. Belt sold separately below. Of 100% cotton. Machine wash, tumble dry. Made in U.S.

Women's Sizes (5'3½"-5'7½"): 18W, 20W, 22W, 24W, 26W, 28W. State size.*

**B Spinnaker denim jeans** are cut fuller in the thigh, tapering slightly to ankle. Del. wt. 1.50 lbs. State size above.*
Color: 36 darkwashed blue. State color number-and-name.

WX 494-2876 D ........................ 39.99

**Also available: Levi's® Dockers® Spinnaker twill pants** in 100% woven cotton. Same styling as above. Del. wt. 1.25 lbs. State size above.*
Colors: 39 periwinkle; 37 navy; 57 khaki; 03 poppy; 78 white; 68 sage; 82 black. State color number-and-name.

WX 494-1605 D ........................ 35.99

**C Spinnaker twill shorts** have full legs. Del. wt. 1.20 lbs. State size above.*
Colors: 39 periwinkle; 57 khaki; 37 navy; 03 poppy; 78 white; 68 sage; 82 black. State color number-and-name.

WX 494-3312 D ........................ 29.99

**D Levi's® Dockers® nubuck leather belt.** With antiqued nickel buckle, tip and double keeper. Measures approximately 1" wide. Lining of polyurethane. Assembled in U.S.; lining imported from Italy. Del. wt. 0.60 lb.
Colors: 52 natural; 36 navy; 54 tan. State color number-and-name.

Waist Sizes: 1X(34-38"), 2X(37½-42"), 3X(41½-46"). State 1X, 2X or 3X—if your waist is at the high end of the measurement range, order the next larger size.

WX 101-0388 D ........................ 26.00

**See size chart (shown opposite).*

*Of Course You Can Charge It—*
*See Page 45.*

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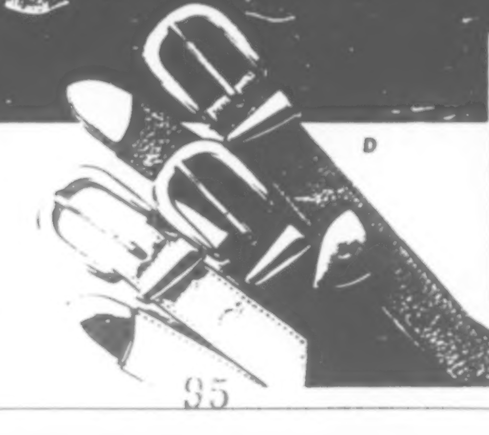

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Photograph 8

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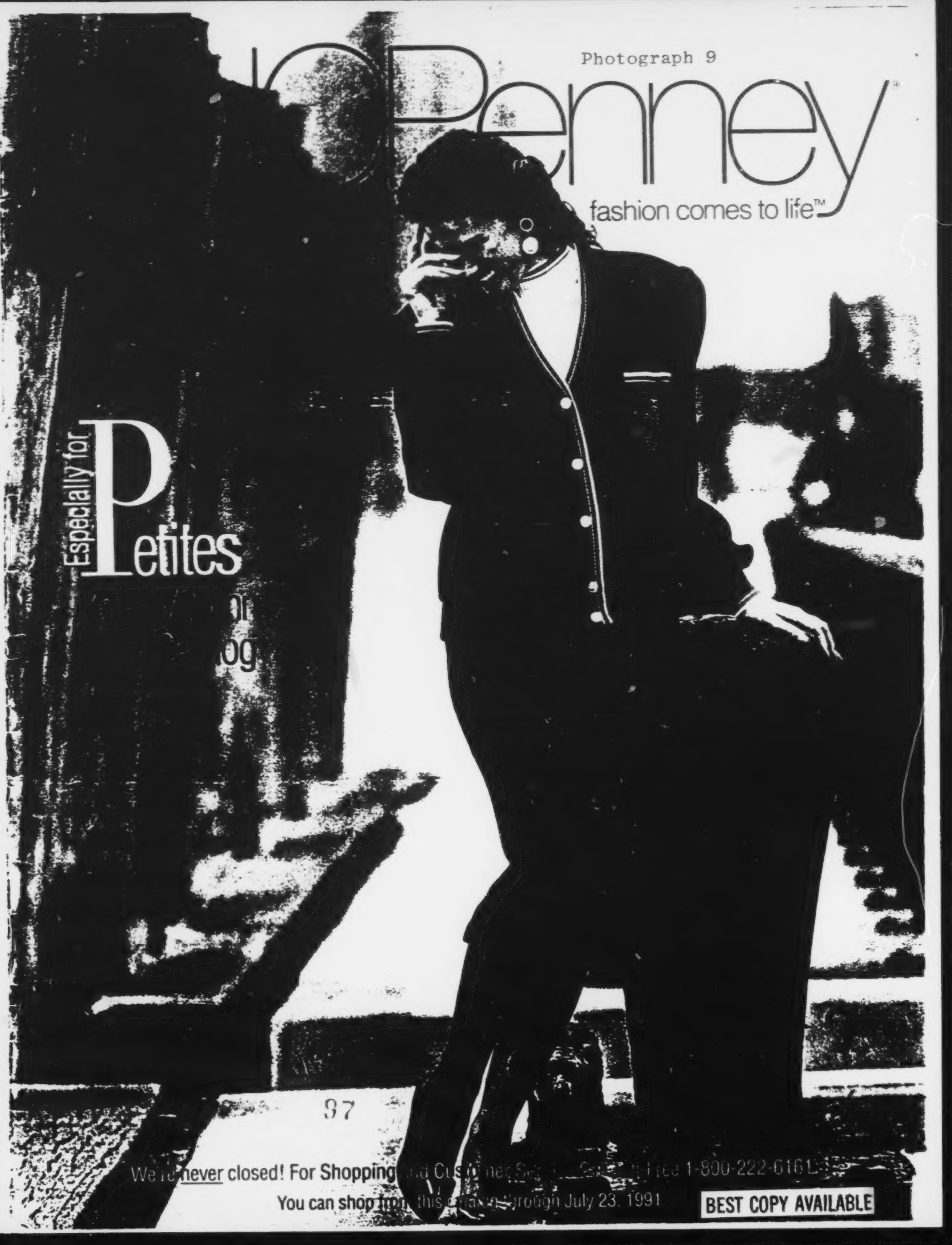
Photograph 9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Photograph 10

E
Blouse
F
Skirt
49
82

Suede belt wraps up the look. Measures approximately 1½" wide with gold-tone swirl buckle. Of pigsuede with vinyl backing. Made in U.S. Del. wt. 0.50 lb.
Colors: 49 rust; 82 black. State color number-and-name.

Waist Sizes: S(24½-28"), M(27½-31"), L(30½-34"). State S, M or L—if your waist is at the high end of the measurement range, order the next larger size.

WM 101-1576 D .......................... 14.00

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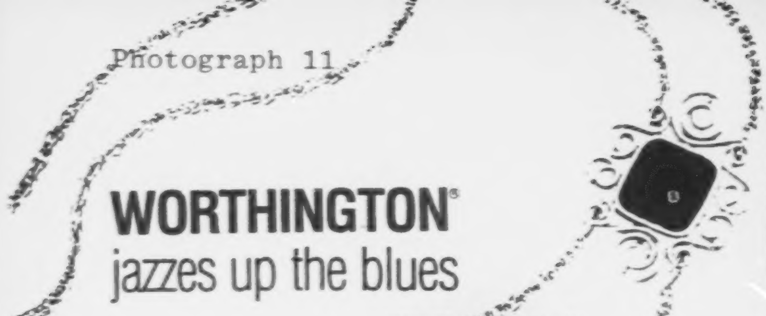
Photograph 11



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G **Paisley vest** in shades of blue and green is great to swing over this fall's fashions. Rayon challis with gold-tone novelty buttons on front closure. Princess seaming for a better fit. Solid black belted back of rayon; fully lined in acetate. Dry clean only. Made in the U.S. or imported of domestic fabric. Del. wt. 0.70 lb.

Women's Petite Sizes: 16WP, 18WP, 20WP, 22WP, 24WP, 26WP. State size.

SL 492-5285 B .......................................... 36.00

Women's Sizes: 16W, 18W, 20W, 22W, 24W, 26W. State size.

SL 492-5434 B .......................................... 36.00

H **Stretch belt** with a gold-tone U-shaped buckle adds a finished touch to this season's separates. Belt is polyester trimmed with suede tabs. Made in U.S. Del. wt. 0.75 lb.

Colors: 36 royal; 82 black. State color number-and-name.

Sizes: 1X(fits waists 34-38"), 2X(37½-42), 3X(41½-46). State 1X, 2X or 3X.

SL 101-1600 D .......................................... 14.00

*Blouse sold on page 14. Shoes sold on page 55.*

*All apparel on these two pages also in Women's Petite*

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on pages 37 and 52 .............. 15.00

# The Production of Meaning in Wedding Photography

A paper presented at the AEJMC annual conference in Boston, August 7-10, 1991

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> There are an awful lot of weddings. Goodness, It's a booming business! And that's one time they really need a good photographer.
>
> Minneapolis Bridal Consultant[1]

> A wedding gives ritualized permission ... Our society, like every society, uses the ritual to conceal the risk, to take the poison out. It is the role of the official wedding photographer to fabricate the experience. Participants are too willing to see what they have been taught to see, what was preconceived.
>
> Photographer Abigail Heyman[2]

What does professional wedding photography have to do with mass communication? Two decades ago most American mass communication researchers would probably have answered this question by saying 'nothing.' Many today still might not see any connection. But in a cultural approach to the study of mass communication, professional wedding photography can be considered one of many important discourses — discourses which help to forge and maintain the links between culture, society and individuals. Professional wedding photography, like television, newspapers, novels and other forms of media, is a structured communicative practice. It is a system which perpetuates particular ways of constructing reality through using the technology and practices of professional photographic representation.

In its conventions and codes and the institutions, organizations and practices which support them, professional wedding photography is *mass* communication. Its products — photographs and their arrangement in a narrative-oriented 'wedding album' — are empowered by the economic dynamics of photographic production as well as the interpersonal dynamics of the making and reception of such visual works. Wedding photography lies at the intersection of institutional forces and the private experiences of individuals. As a cultural form empowered by corporate institutions such as Eastman Kodak and organizations such as the Professional Photographers of America,[3] wedding photography has undoubtedly influenced the traditional American wedding ceremony and thus the experiences of the individuals involved. The practices and products of professional photography project into the wedding experience a particular "way of seeing," as John Berger might say.[4]

This paper is the initial product of a research project that examines what role the institutionalized structures and practices of professional wedding photography play in the American middle-class wedding ceremony as a structured interpersonal ritual.[5] The overall project concerns power relations and what role these relations, manifested in communicative social artifacts such as photographs, play in the negotiation of meanings people undertake in everyday life. What is the role of a particular communicative practice in originating and perpetuating powerful capitalist and patriarchal ideologies? How can one empirically track such hegemonic practices and relations? In general conceptual terms, how does a communicative practice and its products link economic structures and their accompanying ideologies with the structures and ideologies of interpersonal, familial ritual? How do these interrelations affect people's experiences and thus the common-sense meanings people make and utilize in everyday life?

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[1] Telephone interview, March 20, 1990.

[2] Abigail Heyman, *Dreams and Schemes: Love and Marriage in Modern Times* (New York: Aperture Foundation Inc., 1987), p. 14.

[3] The Professional Photographers of America (PPA) is a sort of national guild for portrait photographers. Those who join pay substantial dues. The organization has state chapters and affiliated groups in communities across the United States. The PPA sponsors a professional school, numerous seminars and conventions, and publishes newsletters and a journal called *Professional Photographer*. If members are involved through entering heavily codified photographic competitions at conventions or through organizing and presenting 'how-to' seminars, they are awarded distinctions such as ribbons, medals, titles, etc. The highest award the organization offers is the title of 'Master of Photography.' These 'Masters' then serve as judges in photographic competitions and are nominated for committee work and other leadership roles. Members who are not involved in PPA activities still are able to keep up with the latest developments in professional portrait photography through reading PPA publications and attending conventions and seminars.

[4] John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (New York: Penguin Books, 1983).

[5] Marcus and Fisher claim 'ritual' in traditional anthropology is considered a "means of converting the obligatory norms of society into the desires of the individual, of creating social sentiments, of transforming statuses,

Such questions could be asked about many communicative processes taking place in complex industrial societies such as the United States. In critical and cultural approaches to communication, attempts to answer such questions are continual. This initial study, based on ethnographic data, is grounded in particular strands of the relatively recent critical, cultural and interdisciplinary research in what has been labeled 'mass' communication.[6] The theoretical framework for this study is generated from the disciplines of mass communication, American studies, sociology, anthropology, and British cultural studies.

Using ethnography in the study of visual communication is a rather recent development in the scholarly community. Ethnography implies a different view of photography than has usually been the case. Two general misconceptions in particular have affected producers, consumers and scholars of photography since its origins more than 150 years ago. The first concerns how the photograph is often considered to be something which "tells neither truth nor falsehood, but ... tells it like it is."[7]

In this "snatch of reality" sense as well as in the technological sense of the photographic process needing light, photography *is* a natural process. It is no wonder that the new technological process was considered "a discovery of nature's capacity to register its own images." One can understand why photographs were called "sun pictures," and instead of being "made," they were said to be "'obtained' or 'taken', like natural specimens found in the wild."[8]

Thus, because of this inescapable nature of the photographic process, it is not difficult to grasp why the strong belief in the factuality of the photograph persists — why people tend to confuse reality with representation when viewing photographs. But while this belief in the photograph "telling it like it is" may be understandable — it is also naive.

The second misconception concerns not only photography, but the study of visual communication in general. Photographs — and most visual communication products — are often considered to be the sole creations of an individual author. Studies of photography usually examine how the talent, experience and personality of an individual are communicated through his or her photographic images. Much of this scholarly concern with the individual author of photographs comes from art appreciation and the "model of conventional art history," according to American Studies historian Alan Trachtenberg.[9] He writes:

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effecting cures, acting out mythic charters for social action, and reintegrating agonistic social groups." George Marcus and Michael Fisher, *Anthropology as Cultural Critique* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1986), p. 61. Important for this study are the concepts related to how ritual acts serve to merge culture, social structure and individuals — the first elements in Marcus and Fisher's definition of ritual. Structured interpersonal rituals such as weddings can be thought of as expressing and validating deep-seated past and present social relations and cultural meanings through a series of conventional procedures. However, such a view is not meant to indicate that rituals are static wholes composed of coherent patterns. In this study, the definition of ritual also includes the assumption of continual process — how a ritual, like culture, is structured but at the same time is "a porous array of intersections where distinct processes crisscross from within and beyond its borders." Renato Rosaldo, *Culture and Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989), p. 20.

[6] According to my extensive search of books, periodicals, dissertations and theses, wedding photography is an unexplored area of visual communication. It has received no attention from scholars. Portrait photography, which is very similar in style and organization, has received little attention from scholars. There are a few scattered historical accounts and only one article dealing with social and cultural forms of analysis: Janet Ragan and Albert Smouse, "Pose Preference in Social and Business Photographs," *Studies in Visual Communication* 7 (Summer 1981).

[7] Sol Worth, *Studying Visual Communication* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981), p. 175.

[8] Ian Jeffrey, *Photography, A Concise History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), p. 10.

[9] Alan Trachtenberg, ed., *Classic Essays on Photography*, (New Haven, Conn.: Leete's Island Books,

> In general, histories have provided ... compilations of connoisseurship. There has been little notable effort to address the (photographic) medium itself, to examine its evolving character, its social and cultural properties, its complex relations with other media, and the great variety of roles it performs.[10]

These two misconceptions have limited the scholarship concerning photography. The medium involves much more than individuals producing snatches of reality in some sort of social and cultural vacuum. Photographic images are social constructions — they are negotiated interpretations of "reality" which are always grounded in particular social and cultural contexts. Photography is a social process, as are all communicative processes. The traditional "transmission" model of communication — where communication is defined as one "imparting, sending, transmitting or giving information to others" —does not answer questions of social process. Instead, a "ritual view" of communication needs to be used. In the ritual model, communication is not considered a one-to-one personal process, but a social process linked with such terms as "sharing, participation, fellowship, and the possession of a common faith."[11]

Despite these misconceptions, the study of visual communication as a social process is growing. Several scholars in the past two decades have conducted research in this area. In art history, works by scholars such as Janet Wolff, Michael Baxandall and John Berger have explored how art must be studied by not only focusing on connouisseurship, but by analyzing the organizational structures and cultural contexts in which art was produced. Janet Wolff writes in*The Social Production of Art* how every form of cultural production is a collective process "situated" within social structures at a given historical time.[12] Because of this, the individual author is as much of a mediator as a creator. The author mediates between his own creativity and the social, cultural and historical contexts in which he produces images.

Michael Baxandall's methods for understanding fifteenth-century painting are just as applicable today for one seeking to understand photography. Baxandall, in *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy*, looks at four levels of the production process in particular: (1) the contractual arrangements between master painter and patron (deadlines, types of paint to be used, payment, who would actually do the painting, etc.). (2) the function of paintings (provides status to patron; instructs viewers spiritually, etc.). (3) the visual constructions of paintings (specific codes employed and where codes originated). (4) how the paintings were received (how viewers interpreted style; what critiques meant, etc.). Therefore, without an understanding of the production process — the social context — behind a fifteenth-century painting, the modern viewer will arrive at a completely different interpretation of the work than was originally intended.

John Berger, in his book and BBC television series *Ways of Seeing*, describes in critical detail how what people see in art and other visual communication is very much affected by "what we know or what we believe."[13] Howard Becker advocates a similar approach as a tool for sociological investigation of contemporary art. Becker shifts the investigation from the individual "genius" author and his images to the collective processes of production. In doing this Becker enlarges the field of vision for the visual communication researcher — production of art is seen as a cooperative, collective, negotiated, on-going process mediated by social conventions. According to Becker, the individual author is dependent on a "large network of cooperating people, all of whose work is essential to the final outcome."[14]

Barbara Rosenblum, Richard Christopherson and Dona Schwartz use approaches similar to Becker's in studies of photography. Rosenblum, in her comparative ethnography of news, advertising and fine art photography, in a sense fine-tunes Becker's approach by analyzing how the social conventions that help shape the production process originate in social

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1980), p. vii.

[10] Ibid., p. vii.

[11] James W. Carey, "A Cultural Approach to Communication," *Communication* 2 (1975): 3.

[12] Janet Wolff, *The Social Production of Art*, (New York: New York University Press, 1984), pp. 22-25.

[13] Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, p. 8.

[14] Howard S. Becker, "Art as Collective Action," *American Sociological Review* 39 (1974): 769.

structures and organization. Christopherson studies fine art photographers as an "occupational group."[15] Schwartz presents an ethnographic comparison of the "specific symbol-sharing communities" of fine art photographers and amateur camera club photographers.[16]

Other studies have focused on the "home mode" of visual media — the private construction and use of images. Sol Worth in his appendix to *Studying Visual Communication* outlines a method he calls "ethnographic semiotics" — rather than the researcher reading the visual text, the researcher studies the "ordinary" person as a text producer and reader.[17] Richard Chalfen, in a different proposal, advocates studying people's home movies as "cultural documents." Chalfen suggests that studying home movies is an unobtrusive way to find cultural patterns of meaning — shared values, beliefs and behaviors.[18] Christopher Musello studies the "functions of family photography" through analysis of family snapshots and photo albums — how photography "occurs in every-day life."[19]

Concerning the ethnographic study of wedding photography, Erving Goffman's semiological analysis in*Gender Advertisments* is of particular interest. For Goffman, nonverbal (visual) communication plays an important role in ceremony, which can be anything from a graduation exercise or elaborate wedding to an interpersonal greeting or farewell. Education, religion, politics and even interpersonal relationships — all involve ritual.[20] Such rituals typically involve some sort of "social situation"; thus all behaviors in such a setting have significant meaning. All behaviors are "displays" which inform others about one's "social identity, mood, intent," etc. — the social situations of ceremonies are "arenas for mutual monitoring." In short, ceremonies are combinations of the real and the ideal — they utilize real behaviors in order to support a consensus of idealized, negotiated meanings about the social structure.[21]

Often, objects — "relics" such as "souvenirs, mementos, (and) gifts" — are used to help keep the displays of meaning in ceremonies and rituals fresh in people's memories. Photographs are among such relics, but they mean more than other relics because of their representational quality — they are a combination of "ritual and relic." Photographs depict "freeze-dried" moments of actual ritual in transitory ceremonies. They "fix" such moments into "permanent accessibility." Photographs can "further condense ... social arrangements and ultimate beliefs which ceremony fleetingly provides the senses." Thus, photographs themselves are powerful (and portable) condensed representations of the real and the ideal. In this sense they are "hyper-ritualizations" — displays of meaning abstracted from their original contexts.[22]

## Theory, Methods and Research Subjects

All of the above-mentioned scholarly work stresses that photography is a social process. Photographs are much more than "psychological, aesthetic or technical products" — they are products of "social and cultural dynamics."[23] I subscribe to this developing theoretical framework of photography as social process.

As stated earlier, this analysis is the first of several in an ongoing project. While other research in this project will focus critically on actual image constructions and will utilize the methods of semiotic, content and historical analyses, this paper focuses largely on interactions between professional wedding photographers and clients — on "communication behavior as it occurs."[24] In following Glaser and Strauss' strategies for generating theory in qualitative research,[25] I formulated the following theoretical questions from my data, in conjunction with Goffman's ideas in *Gender Advertisments*:

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[15] Richard Christopherson, "Making Art with Machines: Photography's Institutional Inadequacies," *Urban Life and Culture* 3 (1974): 3.

[16] Dona Schwartz, "Doing the Ethnography of Visual Communication: The Rhetoric of Fine Art Photography," *Research in Language and Social Interaction*21 (1987): 229.

[17] Worth, *Studying Visual Communication*,appendix pp. 200-202.

[18] Richard Chalfen, "Cinema Naivete: A Study of Home Moviemaking as Visual Communication," *Studies in the Anthropology of Visual Communication* 2 (1975):126-130.

[19] Christopher Musello, "Family Photography," in Jon Wagner, ed., *Images of Information* (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1979), pp. 102-103.

[20] Goffman defines ritual as "a single, fixed element of a ceremony." *Gender Advertisments* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1979), p.1.

[21] Ibid., pp. 1-9.

[22] Ibid., pp. 10-11.

[23] Musello, "Family Photography," pp. 101, 118.

1. How does the practice of professional wedding photography link with the actual wedding ceremony?
2. How do conventionalized photographic image constructions correspond to the actual wedding ceremonial displays and rituals?
3. What is the significance of these linkages or lack or them?

During a six-month period in the fall of 1989 and spring of 1990, I spent approximately 75 hours observing a professional portrait/wedding photographer go about his business during different time periods and on different days of the week. I observed him "consulting" with couples who were planning a wedding and interested in his services; I observed him discussing final wedding picture and album orders with couples; and I observed him photograph several weddings. In addition, I observed him in a number of other situations, such as photographing families in the studio or attending meetings of a local professional photographers' organization. During this period, I also interviewed the photographer I observed as well as other professional wedding/portrait photographers.

Bill,[26] the photographer I observed as well as interviewed, is 32 years old and has operated his own "full-service" portrait studio in one of the newer suburbs of the Minneapolis/St. Paul area for more than two and a half years. At present, the majority of his business is in wedding coverage. My key informant "books" one or two weddings a weekend during the wedding "season," from early spring through fall. Several years ago, Bill completed a six-month comprehensive training course in commercial photography and since then has attended seminars sponsored by the Professional Photographers of America.

Bill is a member of the national and state PPA organizations and is on the board of the local Twin Cities chapter. He worked for several other photographers before opening his own studio. Bill has one part-time employee who performs office-related tasks, but he is the sole photographer. Because of this, he claims to have had to "turn down 100 weddings last year." Bill, who is married and has a young daughter, appears to be quite ambitious and energetic. He works long hours to make sure his studio is successful.

In addition to the work with my key informant, I conducted interviews with 15 other professional portrait/wedding photographers in the Twin Cities seven-county metro area.[27] Of the 16 professional photographers interviewed (including my key informant), twelve work full time in the business of professional photography and four work part-time in photography and part or full time elsewhere. While ages range from 29 to 66, the average age of those interviewed is 43. Only two of the 16 are female. Eight work out of "storefront" studios in a business location, and eight work out of residences. All but two of those interviewed are affiliated with one or more of the PPA organizations.

While the percentage of each photographer's business devoted to wedding photography range from 30 percent to 100 percent, the average is 66 percent. Wedding order dollar-figures range from $600 to $2,000, with the average being $1,180.[28] Thirteen own their photographic business; three are employees. Of those who own their own businesses, four employ nine or more part-time wedding photographers; others employ fewer or work alone. While some of those interviewed photograph as many as 75 weddings annually, others photograph far fewer. Two no longer photograph any — instead, they manage and train other professionals working for them. In 1989 those interviewed photographed a total of 518 weddings, and their studios accounted for an approximate total of 1,800 wedding coverages in the metro area.

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[24] Schwartz, "Doing the Ethnography of Visual Communication," p. 229.

[25] Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitiative Research*(New York: Aldine Publishing Co., 1967).

[26] The name "Bill" is a pseudonym.

[27] I define the term "professional" as the photographers I interviewed do. A professional may be a full- or part-time photographer of weddings, but he or she is no "hack." The professional photographer has high-quality equipment, which in the Midwest means at the least a medium-format camera such as a Hasselblad or Mamiya RB 67, camera filters, a sturdy tripod,and a lighting system, which could range from a quality on-camera flash unit to a portable studio including a power pack, lights on stands and diffusion equipment such as umbrellas. The professional also has some form of training or education, whether it be vocational or college schooling; attending seminars conducted by organizations like the PPA; or serving as the apprentice of a professional.

Finally, it must be noted that I am no stranger to professional wedding photography. I was a 'native' in the business of portrait/wedding photography for more than four years. I worked for a combination studio/photographic processing center in the Midwest from late 1981 through early 1986. I estimate I photographed about 200 weddings during this period. Because of this, at times I wonder if I am too close to the subject to analyze it adequately. However, I think my background enhances my ability to gather and analyze data. For example, several of those interviewed said they felt they could "open up" to me more. As one photographer said:

> I can talk to you because you are one of us. I don't think I would have let you interview me if you hadn't told me you had shot a lot of weddings.

In addition to aiding in my ability to gather data, I believe my experiences as a photographer in some ways help me to analyze material better. For example, I am able to use my experiences as a check on statements the photographers made during interviews.

## Discussion and Analysis

The American wedding ceremony as traditional ritual is a social rite of passage often enveloped in personal, familial relations and religious belief. In addition to personal significance, the traditional wedding ceremony adds a special *social significance* to the behaviors of those involved in the particular social situation of marriage. This perhaps explains why people follow traditions they really do not understand well. Why the white dress? Why the cake? Why a church service for a couple who are professed agnostics?

According to Bill, "People don't even know what the customs of the wedding are. They don't know why they buy a wedding dress — they don't know the history of the customs." This is true, and it does not matter. It is likely that people add these ritualized elements to the wedding event not necessarily because the rituals have deep personal significance, but because they have an accepted social significance. They are ritualized displays which all recognize — they are conventionalized messages that attest to the significance of the occasion not only to those participating, but to those who 'witness' the displays as well. The same is true of the photographs.

Wedding photographs, for the most part, are highly conventionalized, but this does not detract from their significance — it adds to their significance because it affirms the particular social situation of the wedding. During the formal picture-taking session, people being posed often joke about being a "mannequin" or a "Barbie Doll." Bill even jokingly refers to his subjects as "bodies" sometimes. For example, when he is setting up a new group picture he might say, "We need some new bodies here!" But people accept and even enjoy this obvious "conventionalizing" of their presentations of self. They do not express horror or disgust at being depersonalized. Portrait photographers recognize this, of course, and most make sure their creative juices, so to speak, stay within the bounds of the codes of portrait photography. Being unconventional, as a fine art photographer might do in order to be "creative," could hurt. According to one photographer:

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[28] According to *Modern Bride*'s "Bridal Registration Study" of 1988, the average wedding in the United States now costs $10,000. Thus, it can be assumed photography is one of the major costs associated with weddings. This information was supplied during a March 21 phone conversation with Dayton's manager of Gift Registry in Minneapolis.

> We read from left to right — we like to see things happen in that way. I only know of one photographer who is what you might call creative. Other portrait photographers look at his stuff and say, 'Wow, I never thought of it that way!' But the guy has been broke four times and can't sell his product.

Thus, while some photographers may emphasize candids and "being fun" and others may emphasize "being a friend" and "capturing romance," most wedding coverages are quite similar — they include similar poses; similar lighting; and similar "captured" events and feelings in similar narrative order in similar leatherette album books. The photography is not really a highly personalized documentary as the album inscribed with "Our Wedding" might imply. But most people don't want a highly personalized documentary — they want a "hyper-ritualization," as Goffman would say. For example, of one photographer's four wedding packages, "The Natural" is the package for those who want "unposed candids" in "photojournalism style." So far this photographer has had only two couples choose this coverage, one of which he has not photographed yet. The one he did photograph went as follows:

> ... the other turned into an expanded 'Deluxe' coverage because well, the mother thought she wanted a lot of the natural stuff, but then she starts describing what she wants in the photographs — and her daughter says, 'Mom, you say you want candids, but then you want this and this and this to be the candids!' So she was wanting what was no different than what we had done for years. ... they ended up just wanting portraits in the environment.

Photographs, because they are permanent representations which can influence one's memory of the ceremony, tend to increase the signification of the wedding event. However, the process of photography also alters the signification of the event. It imposes itself on the actual ceremonial event, and its conventionalized images may tend to mystify memories of the actual rituals of the ceremony. In other words, the photographs do not necessarily represent the actual rituals and emotions which were involved, but how the rituals and emotions *should have been*, according to the wedding myth in our culture.

As one photographer said, "Part of it's the dream, you know? ... I mean, since (a bride) was a little girl she's thought of that wedding day as a point of focus ..." Other photographers label this phenomenon the "fantasy," or the "Cinderella story" or the "illusion." However one phrases it, it is apparent that the photographer in collaboration with his or her subjects imposes the photographic process on the actual ceremony in order to create through pictures a sometimes artificial and always idealized account of the actual ceremony and those involved.

Yet, at the same time, the photography is actually a *part* of the ceremony — the process of taking pictures is itself a ritual, and the resulting wedding album photographs, as representations of ritual, are part ritual and part relic. Thus, the practice of photography at the wedding is itself ritualized display — if anything, it signifies the couple getting married thinks enough of the event (or has enough money) to have a professional photograph it.[29]

The resulting wedding album is another level of ritualized display — one finds between the leatherette covers a potent, condensed version of the *significations* of the event. The album is much more than a personal record — it is a narrative photographic construction of significant social meanings. In the language of semiotics, some of the images are predominately *denotative* in nature and thus more documentary; some are predominately *connotative* in nature and thus are more mythical. All the wedding images, however, are conventional displays which thus have agreed-upon social significance.

In any case, one must always keep in mind that wedding photography is at base a business. The photographers make the most of the somewhat illogical nature of ritualized display in the wedding ceremony. While most claim to believe that what they provide couples with is valuable or even "priceless," they usually qualify such statements by commenting on how "weird" or "odd" the process of American weddings and professional photography of weddings are. For example, one photographer, soon after telling me how "important" wedding pictures are for couples, said weddings are "a waste of money" and were "just commercial foolishness." He then said, "But if they want to spend $600 or $700 on pictures, that's fine with me." Or as Bill once told me while we were returning from a wedding coverage, "When you sit down and think about it, weddings are really strange. The average wedding costs about $15,000 to $25,000 today. That's absurd! It's retarded!" But, of course, it's "good business."

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[29] Several of those interviewed considered status display to be an important motivating factor for couples hiring professional photographers, especially *expensive* professional photographers. This topic will receive more consideration in another paper.

The following analysis will be divided into three parts — each being an elaboration of material presented in the previous paragraphs. The first will deal with wedding photography as a ritualized part of the ceremony; the second will deal with the denotative documentary nature of wedding photographs; the third will deal with the connotative mythical nature of wedding photographs. It is through these three levels of meanings that we can better understand how wedding photography is a social process.

### *Wedding Photography as Ritual*

Being a wedding photographer is not an easy job — Bill says one must always be "part technician and part public relations person." The wedding photographer is involved in what people generally consider a necessary but potentially unpleasant process. The photography is usually considered to be an imposition by at least some of those participating in wedding ceremonies. The problem is that the photographer is "entering their private world," according to Bill. Complicating this further is the fact that the wedding couple's "private world" is on the wedding day populated by a whirlwind of friends and family members who may not normally see one another.

In short, the wedding photographer usually steps into a reunion of significant others. Although it is a "happy" or "special" day and the photographer may be extremely entertaining, thoughtful and friendly, most people in wedding parties don't particularly care to have this stranger with the big camera, tripod and lights take up two or three hours of their time before the wedding ceremony and then follow them around some more during their reception, blinding them with bursts from an electronic flash unit. It may get old quickly. And not only is the photography a sort of imposition, it also usually adds an element of hysteria to the wedding. Bill calls it "panic city." Usually there is little time to take many pictures of many people and events. This often translates into rather frantic maneuvering of people, objects and photographic equipment.

During every wedding I attended with Bill, I overheard comments between families or wedding party members attesting to this negative perception of having to be photographed. For example, I heard two different brides at different weddings say the same sentence to Bill: "I just want to get this over with!" Often people who would be enlisted by Bill to pose with others in a series of pictures would exclaim "Good!" or "Thank god!" when Bill would tell them he was finished photographing them. Now, I do not mean to imply that Bill was callous with people or negative in his interactions in any way. These negative comments were all related to the *general idea* of being photographed at the wedding, not Bill's particular social skills, which are impressive.

Compliments also often attest to how people find or at least expect the photography to be distasteful or an imposition. Of course, during the wedding and before the "proofs" have been processed and distributed to newlyweds, it is impossible for people to complementa photographer on the actual images he or she has made. Still, people make such comments. For example, one photographer told how a bride called him a week after the wedding and told him how much "fun" he was and how "so many people said they really liked the pictures." He then asked her when these people had seen the pictures. She said "they haven't yet."

Such statements attest to the importance of a wedding photographer's ability to interact well with people at weddings in order to battle the negative perceptions people sometimes have of wedding photography. According to one photographer

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who averages $2,000 a wedding, many people say 'I hate to have my picture taken' to him because they have had a "bad experience" with a wedding photographer. He said they are pleasantly surprised when they find that with him "they've indeed enjoyed the process of being photographed." Many of the photographers commented on how couples will like their photographs if they liked the photographer, even if the photographs were less than technically perfect. For example:

> There's a dear man who I had do some weddings a year ago. He had tremendous wit — very funny. But he did a lot of poor pictures. The lighting wasn't right. On occasions his flash didn't go off. We got the proofs back from his first wedding with us and said, 'Oh my God! This is it!' But they liked him so much we got hundreds of dollars of reorders. We would get calls saying they want to book us, but they want him to do the pictures. And they were atrocious pictures. That was the only wedding he really did badly for us. But if it wouldn't have been for his personality, I think we would have been eating that order.

Conversely, if there is some sort of personality clash between the photographer and bride or groom, the chances are the couple will not be pleased with their photographs, no matter how technically perfect they may be. Many of those interviewed commented on this. For example, one successful owner whose studio covered 350 weddings last year said:

> A wonderful photographer — a technocratic behemoth — out there producing beautiful work but insulting people will not have his work received as well as a set of mediocre proofs from a photographer everybody loved. No doubt about that. I've seen it a hundred times.

A 'good' photographer becomes more than a picture-maker; he or she becomes an expert who can help people keep a lid on stress by helping to manage the affairs of the wedding day through fun, friendship and expertise. Thus photographers become central to the wedding ceremony and influence it in important ways.

For example, all of the photographers interviewed said they do their best during consultations to "talk (couples) out of" the tradition of not seeing one another before the wedding. All of those interviewed said that doing the bulk of the formal photography — the photographs of wedding party and family groupings — before the wedding makes for a much easier and less stressful time for the photographer as well as those in the wedding party. Thus, conversations such as the following are not uncommon during consultations:

> I ask them, 'Why don't you want to see each other beforehand? Because you don't know who each other will be? Face it, this dates back to an arranged marriage.' I go on to tell them, 'You've obviously picked each other out. Now all it's gonna do is get in the way of taking good wedding photographs, and I would hate to spoil your wedding day for the sake of an hour or two beforehand when you don't want to see one another.' And I'll even play on the fact that the photographs will last a lot longer than that memory. ... And I will play on the money part of it. I'll say, 'You're not paying me this much to come and slop through your wedding.'

Thus, the photographic ritual usually supercedes the long-standing tradition of bride and groom not seeing one another before the service. The photography changes the traditions and experiences of those involved. Another example of this phenomenon can be seen in how photographers focus on providing services other than photographs. Because of the photographer, certain problems in timing, materials or people may well be avoided. As one photographer said, "I feel we have a certain obligation to the bride and groom to keep the day on schedule." Keeping the day on schedule is often related to certain kinds of photographs. The photographer must keep the photographs of the "formals" before the wedding on schedule so the actual ceremony is not disrupted.

But other "scheduling" becomes quite important as well, such as the speed and rhythm in which bridesmaids walk down the aisle; when and how the cake cutting and feeding takes place; when the couple eats at the reception; and when and how the bouquet is tossed or the garter thrown. All of these rituals tend to be regulated by the photographer — he or she is a sort of pacemaker of many elements of the wedding throughout the day. This "service" is taken on by the photographer in order to "capture" elements of the wedding in the most visually pleasing way possible — one has to be in the right spot at the right time with the right equipment and so forth. But because of this, the day is kept "on schedule," an effect which goes beyond photography.

Other services many photographers provide include small but significant practices such as pinning the flowers on groomsmen and others. According to one photographer:

> What good does it do to have them pin their own flowers on? They will never get it done right. So I just pin all the flowers on. It doesn't take me long to do it, and then I know it gets done when I want it to get done. And they see it as a service. I look at it as avoiding an annoyance.

Despite providing such services, the wedding photographer continually walks a very fine line in what is normally a rather frenzied situation. He or she must be an "orchestrator" of people and events and somewhat "unobtrusive" — all at the same time. The photographer must be very careful not to "get too bossy." Yet, he or she must also "get to the point" and "take command" or few photographs be taken. One way to cope with this is to try to make the picture session "fun and relaxing," as Bill says. To accomplish this, photographers may act "really bubbly" or "play the bumbling one everyone laughs at." Some photographers might "just be a friendly person" or "up in a positive way that has a kind of 'oil on the water' effect." Others have developed rapport that is "kind of like a doctor's bedside manner" — they tend to be "low key" and "considerate."

However one phrase it, it is apparent that *acting* and *interacting* are important parts of successful wedding photography. Most of the photographers interviewed stressed the importance of "performing" and "relating" at weddings. If handled right, the photography can *enhance* the actual wedding experience because the photographer creates opportunities for behaviors which engage real emotions. For example, during the consulting phase, one photographer describes to a couple what some of the events during their wedding might look like and what they may mean:

> ... And then I romance it somewhat. ... I say to the bride, 'It's an hour before the service, and you are in the dressing room. And your daddy comes in and walks up to you, and you pin his boutonniere on his lapel. He looks down into your eyes and there is a moment of time when you are his little girl and he is giving you the last bit of advice he will ever give you. And then your mother walks over and cuddles up in his arms, and they are both looking at you —you're in profile — and they are thinking of you and your future.'

If the couple appears to be enthralled by this description, the photographer will make a note saying 'mother and father looking at bride.' Then during the wedding, he will follow his notes taken at this consultation and actually arrange these types of situations so he can photograph them. Bill does this too. For example, at each wedding I attended with him, I heard him coach the bride on what to do right before she and her father walked down the aisle at the beginning of the ceremony. He told each bride to "stop in the church doorway ... lean over and whisper in his ear, 'I love you,' and kiss him on the cheek." The father is not aware of the arranged moment and reacts accordingly. Bill, of course, snaps the shutter and 'captures' a special emotional moment.

Thus, wedding photographers *create* spontaneous emotional moments in the weddings they photograph. They all insist the emotions are there anyway — the emotions are always "subject-generated" when it comes right down to it. The photographers claim to just find ways to make the emotions visible, whether they are "mining" emotion, "evoking feelings" or "nudging responses."

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### *Wedding Photography as Documentary*

According to this analysis, the actual images constructed by a wedding photographer fall into two categories — predominately denotative or predominately connotative. However, it must stressed that these are never mutually exclusive categories; there is always a mixture of denotation and connotation in each photograph. Predominately denotative images, however, are meant to convey to the viewer actual elements of the wedding ceremony, rather than mythical elements of the ceremony. These images serve as *keys to memories* of the people, events and material objects of the wedding. Thus, they are documentary in nature.

Nearly all those interviewed stress the importance of the denotative level of wedding photographs. One photographer, for example, calls wedding photography "memory insurance." Another claims he is "recording a time in people's lives." And, of course, in one sense they are right. The denotative level is at the base of every photograph. Whether the picture is conventionalized myth or not, it still includes a representation of "real" people during a "real" moment of time. But myth goes beyond the "realness" of the event, as I shall discuss in the next section. Contrived connotation adds a different element to the photograph as "ritual and relic," as Goffman would say. Most of the photographers, however, emphasize the documentary nature of what they do, even though many of the images they produce convey much more than the denotative level. The following comment is typical of those interviewed:

> ... I think if a bride sat down and analyzed 'why am I doing pictures?', at first she might not even know. And then she'd remember that her gown is beautiful and she wants to remember that. And then she wants to remember her family as they were then — at that time in her life. I think it's all people-oriented; what my husband loooked like; what my best friend looked like; what they wore; and all that sort of stuff. ... I don't think that they ever stop and think that ... 'this is a heritage my grandkids are going to look at' ... but I think that is what it is all about.

As stated earlier, the predominately denotative images convey information about three elements of the wedding — people, events and material objects. The photographs of people are more than just images of those special to the couple. These people pictures detail a hierarchy of relationships. In this sense the pictures document a central aspect of wedding ceremonies — the display of kinship. In the ceremony and its rituals, the kinship hierarchy is displayed through such arrangements as who is in the wedding party; the order members of the wedding party are organized into; who does the reading; who is the reception host; who are the cake cutters; and so on. The photographic process adds to the ceremony's kinship displays by first separating the relationships out further and then making them timeless, "freeze-dried" relics which key memories of the actual displays.

What is meant by photography separating relationships out further is how the photographer first isolates a particular kinship group and then photographs it. The bride and groom, of course, are usually a part of each one of these pictures, since most relationships center on them. For example, a photographer does not simply photograph an entire wedding party or family — he separates out particular groups. Usually the photographer will photograph the entire wedding party; the wedding party without ushers; just the bridesmaids; just the groomsmen; just the bride and groom with best man and maid of honor; just the bride and maid of honor; just the groom and best man; and, of course, the most important relationship of all — just the bride and groom. Thus the photographer details a hierarchy or relationships. The same process happens with families. Usually the photographer will first photograph an entire family — including grandparents, aunts, uncles, children of brothers and sisters, etc. Next he will photograph the immediate family; then the bride and groom with their parents; and so on.

Other than people, certain actual events or rituals of the ceremony are nearly always photographed. These include the wedding party walking down the aisle at the beginning of the service; the couple meeting at the alter; the giving of vows; the lighting of the unity candle; the wedding party walking up the aisle after the ceremony; the receiving line; leaving the church; kissing on demand at the reception; and perhaps toasting at the reception. Most of these pictures are taken with less concern for form. The photographer usually uses the harsh and rather flat light of an electronic flash unit. He does not concern himself much with how light falls on the subjects, perfection of pose, and so on. In short, these pictures are usually the only true "candid" — informal and unposed — photographs of the entire wedding.

Certain material objects must also be "captured" on film if the photographer is to have a successful wedding coverage. Of particular importance is the bride's dress — it is by far the central ritualized object of most weddings. When photographers photograph the bride alone, what they are really emphasizing is not the bride herself, but the dress the bride is in. People are often very concerned about "how the dress looks." For example, during every wedding I attended with Bill and often in my own experiences, the same scene would take place: The photographer is taking photographs of the bride alone, but is framing the image so that only the upper half of the bride's body will be in the picture. This means the photographer is not concerned with how the bottom of her dress looks — and it is usually bunched up, not spread out and flowing, as in full-length pictures of the bride. Invariably someone — usually the personal attendent or the mother of the bride — will rush in and start to arrange the bottom of the dress. The photographer must then stop what he or she is doing and assure this person that the bottom of the dress "will not be in the picture."

Other ritualized objects which are usually photographed include the couple's rings, the cake, the bridal bouquets, and the head table at the reception. All of these objects are themselves symbols of certain rituals in the wedding ceremony or the ceremony itself — they are relics endowed with special meaning. Thus, the photographs of these things are objects which represent other objects or events which represent special meanings. After the actual wedding dress ends up in the closet and the cake in people's bellies, the photographs of these ritualized objects keep their meanings fresh in people's minds.

### *Wedding Photography as Myth*

The predominately connotative photographs usually convey a romantic and deeply emotional and significant story which in some ways never existed. These sort of images depict "what happened in front of the camera, not what really happened," according to Bill. The predominately connotative images usually fall into two categories — based on two separate settings. The first setting is in what could be called 'the land of romance.' In these pictures, the bride and groom hold hands; they gaze into each others eyes; they walk off into the future; or they may stand alone, gazing at their ring or bouquet, seemingly pondering the significance of the ceremony.

In the 'land of romance,' people are often bathed in soft light and surrounded by the dream-like haze of a soft-focus filter. It is this type of picture that Bill considers to be among his most creative. The second setting is more grounded in the actual ceremony, but the pictures depict ceremonial rituals which would probably *not have taken place* except in front of the camera. Images of this type include cutting the cake and feeding it to your spouse; the groomsmen pushing the reluctant groom into the church right before the ceremony; the groomsmen or bridesmaids looking at the bride's garter; and so on.

For example, in my own experience and at each of the weddings I observed Bill photograph, the cake-cutting ritual was not really part of the actual ceremony. When the couple cut the cake and fed pieces of it to one another, few in the reception hall took notice. It was usually arranged quickly at the reception and conducted solely for the sake of the still photography and video. It was something to get out of the way, so the cake servers could start cutting up the cake for the meal. It was a completely "staged" event.

Another example is when I observed Bill arrange five bridesmaids around the bride so he could photograph them all looking at the bride's garter. Because of where he positioned the women, some of them could not even see the garter on the bride's thigh. But this did not matter. He told them, "Even though you may or may not be able to see the garter, look right down there — do it anyway. It will look good in the picture." Thus, the actual event had no significance other than serving as a scene to be captured on film. Many of the photographers label these types of images as "gimmicks." Yet, the images do serve a purpose — they fill out the narrative within the pages of the wedding album.

These "mythical" pictures, to use Barthes' term, express an idealized and highly conventionalized fairy tale — or a "movie." Many of the photographers equate the role of the wedding photographer to that of a "director" and the wedding party members to "stars" or "players." According to one photographer:

> ... I suppose when you do it right — if you orchestrate it appropriately — then it's kind of like a movie. And people get into movies, you know. Even if they know the plot and they know the ending and they know people are actors, they get into it. And I think in a sense (wedding couples) want to be those actors because they want the happy ending the movie has.

Thus, wedding party members may be stars in their own"movie" or "play," but it is the photographer who creates much of the mood and impact. Conversations among those in the wedding party during weddings often reflect this "star" quality. For example, people at weddings often express a sort of amazement at how detailed the construction of a photograph can be. A person is instructed to place a foot in a certain position; bend the knees a certain way; smile "big" or "a little" or not at all; tilt and turn the head in various ways; look at a certain spot; drop or lift a shoulder; hold the bouquet, ring, garter, glass, hand, etc. a certain way; place an article of clothing in a certain way; and so on. In these situations, the subjects of photographs are often equated with public figures — particularly glamorous models or movie stars.

For example, at one wedding the groom's mother began calling the groom "Mr. Hollywood" during the picture-taking session. Another groomsman said the groom was "suave and debonair." At another wedding the best man commented on his pose with the groom as being "just like G Q!" Thus, during the photography, people apparently attain a sort of celebrity status for a short period of time. This status is encouraged by the photographic ritual and subsequently "captured" by the photography as well. The "celebrity-ness" of those in the wedding party is "freeze-dried" into every photograph. Thus, it too becomes part of the myth.

The wedding "story" is composed of an album of photographs — two-dimensional images which people often mistake for "snatches of reality." This empowers the photographic wedding story with a sense of "reality." In short, the denotative level of the pictures makes the connotative level appear to be factual. Couples are able to open their wedding album and say, 'Yes, we *lived* the fairy tale.' But this all must be very subtle or the myth will not appear to be real. According to Bill:

> People as a whole don't like to look posed. But with any photograph you have to pose them to some degree to get what you are looking for. ... I don't know how many wedding couples have come in and said, 'I don't want a posed look.' Well, what does this mean? It means most of them are just saying they want to look natural —they want it to look like the photographer wasn't even there.

Thus, the narrative picture story is partially based on the actual and partially based on conventional fantasy. Yet, the album, as a "text," is "read" as if it is entirely based on the actual. And since the pictures aid one's memories of the ceremonial event, it is fair to say that one's memories are partially based not on what happened, but on conventionalized myth. Thus, it appears that some wedding memories are *constructed* through wedding photographs.

According to the photographers, what the viewers of wedding photographs "imagine" is a sort of deeper reality of the wedding — a sort of romantic essence. The wedding photographer simply presents, through manipulations of camera, filters, lighting and poses, the romance *behind* the ceremony, at least in pictures taken in the 'land of romance.' Bill says, "We tighten on their emotions ... we do things that are closer to what they would be doing if no one else were around."

However, these emotional images which photographers construct are more than simply contrived — they are conventional. There is a difference between the two terms. Thus, the photographer may or may not be photographing couples doing "what they would be doing if no one else were around." The photographer is always, however, constructing images which are conventional — it is relatively the *same* romantic fairy tale for each couple. And it is usually presented in the same narrative form in each wedding album. So the plot and the scenes of the "movie" don't change — just the actors.

Thus, the mythical photographs, whether they present the emotional "bones" of the particular ceremony or not, are always presenting the social "bones" of the American wedding ceremony. Conventional imagery is important because it is a display with an agreed-upon meaning. As one photographer says, "I think some of the things we do are a little gimmicky. But people like it, you know, and they sell." Bill apparently agrees with this. As we were leaving one wedding reception, he told me that the couple "didn't want anything to do with the cake-eating shot — they said it's stupid!" This, however, is the exception — most couples apparently want this photograph taken. Bill then went on to say, "Personally, that's the way it should be — I think it's stupid too, but most people want it taken ..."

Thus, the cultural ideal — the conventional myth — is given a touch of reality not only through ritual and ceremony, but through photography as well. And even in photographs which are not predominately connotative, the ideal of "looking your conventional best" reaches deep. For example, there is a great deal of somewhat subtle construction in the series of kinship group photographs — in these the posed appears candid; the constructed looks natural. As Bill often tells the people he is posing, "It feels weird, but it looks good." In other words, he is saying 'what is actually happening here is not what you will see in the picture.' The actual doesn't matter, because perfection is being constructed.

## Conclusion

The medium of photography has worked its way into the wedding ceremony in several ways and thus has affected what the wedding ceremony means to those Americans who enlist the services of the professional photographer. Photographers not only impact the course of actual events during the day of the wedding, they influence the emotional experiences people have at weddings, from a bride's relationship with her father to how a groom feels like a movie star on his wedding day. No photograph can be constructed in a social vacuum. Wedding photographs, as part of the display-oriented rituals of the wedding ceremony, particularly involve the social process of interaction between picture maker, subject and circumstance. Wedding photography is not about producing photographs as much as it is about producing or influencing the wedding experience.

Although I am finding the results of this research intriguing, I know I have excluded much more about wedding photography than I have included. There are many rich avenues of analysis which I have yet to explore. For example, a more detailed analysis needs to be made of the construction of actual photographs as well as the organization of photographs into a wedding album narrative. The development of the codes and conventions of wedding photography need to be tracked. When and how did the narrative story originate? When and how did the emphasis on the mythic in wedding photographs originate? An analysis of the organizational structures of wedding photography could also be beneficial. How are these codes and conventions perpetuated within the profession? Ethnographic research of the profession's organizational groups, such as the PPA chapters, could help here. Research into the professional schools would also be beneficial. In addition, the relationship between wedding photography and other genres of portrait photography needs to be examined.

Interviews with couples who have gone through the experience of professional wedding photography could be insightful. Why do people think they needed a professional photographer? What did they think of the actual photographing? What do they do with their wedding album? Some quantitative applied research has been conducted in this area, usually by corporations such as Kodak. Their survey instruments, however, are limited because of their administrative nature.

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# THE SOUND OF FACT

Paper submitted to

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Athens, Ohio

# THE SOUND OF FACT

Every editor I know interprets freedom of expression to also mean responsibility for accuracy. But how can editors, who rarely gather facts themselves, monitor accuracy? Every writer knows how. The Question. "Charlie, c'm'ere a minute." Charlie's ulcer gives a lurch. "You say the flood hit Tuesday but the family reappeared on Thursday. What happened to Wednesday? Sarah, you say the senator thinks the collapse of the Cold War will change domestic politics. So how long have you been reading minds?"

That ego curdling question unlocking holes in a writer's thinking is the very essence of editing. Can students be taught to ask such questions? Or does it take years of experience to learn how to break a writer's heart? I don't know, but I've been trying to find out in magazine classes by teaching the idea of Authority Base. This concept blends, without apology, questions of ethics, logic, style, research and audience into an approach that mimics the editorial process. No editor sits down with a list of Ten Common Fallacies before working with a manuscript. He or she just reads. Authority Base is a tool for developing just reading.

After asking students to provide two magazines for classroom discussion, one they like and one they hate, I then define Authority Base for them as "language cues that suggest or reveal the author's information sources to readers." The underlined terms are the keys to the concept. Language, not the facts themselves, are our subject matter. We assume for class that all facts before us are true, from sightings of Big Foot to Pentagon briefings. Why it sounds true is our question. Information means we are to consider any form of nonfiction--scholarly writing, news, magazine articles, even television ads. If a medium claims something is true then we are to be curious about how it lets us know that.

Readers, the third term, is a limiter; that is, we are to examine only words actually in text. We assume all media, from *Wrestling World* to *Harper's*, check facts thoroughly but some decide not to burden their readers with details of that effort. Our goal is to see why they might choose to do so. A recipe, for example, usually blurts out instructions. ("Take two cups flour. . .") There is an implied source, the test kitchen, but no language in the text says so. This Authority Base, named the Trust Me, has as a virtue prose that is clean and crisp. Its hazard is, if the cake falls, readers are mad at the magazine, not the source. Each Authority Base has virtues and hazards like this and a medium has to weigh them in setting its standards of journalism. Service magazines, for example, are comfortable with the Trust Me, but political or issues magazines avoid it because their readers wouldn't tolerate its didactic tone.

So far, with the help of my students, I have collected twenty-six Authority Bases like the Trust Me. I usually start discussion by developing a few of these in full, giving name, description, samples and my opinion of their virtues and hazards. For example:

THE DIRECT QUOTE: As journalism students they know this as the simple attribution, but are they also aware that all that is claimed as truth in a quote is that someone said something. What the person said could be untrue. An unsophisticated reader might not notice this distinction. The virtue of attribution is it deflects responsibility for the truth of a statement from the medium to the source. The hazard is the medium may not want to shirk that responsibility. Magazines that see themselves as journalism-in-depth will have policies against relying on quotes as the only Authority Base in an article.

SENSORY DETAIL is elaborate description gathered by a reporter looking, touching, tasting, smelling, hearing. In this era of New Journalism finding examples is as simple as opening a magazine at random. The virtue of such detail is it provides an intense reading experience. The audience gets a sense of reality from description no quote can provide. The hazard is the "truth" of the text is totally dependent on one fallible human's perceptions. It is virtually impossible to fact check sensory experience. Literary, nature and travel magazines will tolerate this hazard, but political, history and news magazines are more cautious about it. Service magazines avoid it because it takes up too much space.

GENERIC THEM. These are vague people phrases such as "some housewives, many students, a few protesters" or even "some scientists, many biologists, a few psychiatrists. . ." This kind of phrase alludes to knowledge about groups of people but does not quote any studies or statistics to support the assertion. Its virtue--it's efficient. It takes only three words to say "some scientists argue." It may take half a dozen paragraphs to quote the specific scientists and their arguments. On the hazard side, the generic phrases may not summarize real knowledge but be the writer's commonsense feeling that people ought to think or do such and such. Using general phrases as transitions to introduce specific information is probably harmless, but allowing the phrases to stand alone unsupported is a deliberate policy decision. Media which tightly package information depend on the Generic Them. Others, whose readers demand greater depth, avoid it.

THIRD PERSON POINT OF VIEW. This was "Sarah's" mistake above. Writing about thoughts or unseen actions as if the author (and readers) were there is essential in fiction but controversial in journalism. Like Sensory Detail, it gives writing a vivid, compelling and perhaps deeper sense of truth than the dispassionate "she said." But is it journalism? Magazines which promote journalism as literature, such as Esquire, New York, New Yorker, Harper's, Wigwag and many more are totally comfortable with it. If Charlie were writing for one of these magazines he should describe his flood victims' Wednesday in third person with no quotes. Sarah, however, is obviously working for a medium which believes such literary devices cross the line into fiction. She will have to revise her sentence to read, "The senator says he thinks. . ."

After five or six like this, I invite the class to help. I define one, give a sample, but they have to identify the virtues and hazards. The Generic You, I might offer, is the author addressing the reader directly as in, "You can achieve a slimmer silhouette by wearing vertical stripes." I do not have a secret agenda in which they have to guess the "right" virtues and hazards. Any weakness and strength they see is right thinking. Virtues usually come easily; the~~y~~ You is intimate. Hazards are harder; at first I have to prompt: the You can be condescending and it substitutes a presumed shared experience for researched fact.

If this part of the discussion goes well, they see hazards and vitures fairly readily, I complicate the problem. I don't give them labels or examples but have them look at their magazines to find bases that are different from the ones already discussed. They're to create the names. In one class session recently they invented the Insider, the We, and the We're All In This Together. Part of the fun is the whimsy of their labels.

This last one was from a television ad. A student asked what the authority base was in a current ad for a sinus medication which features Micheal Lerned inviting viewers to become charter members in a club. I asked what they wanted to call it ~~called~~ and then asked for strengths and weaknesses. A strength was easy for them, the appeal of belonging. A weakness was tougher; I finally had to say I thought club membership had nothing to do with the merits of the product. It was a cause/effect fallacy; joining a club wouldn't relieve headaches, although the medicine may.

Ads have been a rich source of ideas for Authority Bases. My favorite, again from a student, is the I'm Not a Doctor But I Play One on TV after an ad in which an actor begins by disavowing being a docter and then proceeds to give medical advice anyway. A synonym is Transference, that is, when a person's expertise in one area, say football, is used as authority to give advice in another, say choice of soft drink.

Discussion is followed by written exercises. In the past I've had students compare the dominant bases of their two magazines, or revise an article from one authority base to another, or study the magazine they don't like and defend its choices of authority bases. Another exercise is to have them read an article and submit a list of ego smashing questions for the writer. I've yet to have a student who couldn't find holes in an article after the Authority Base classes although the clarity is sometimes stressful. A student held up his Newsweek in class during one of these discussions. "Every paragraph has a 'some people' phrase in it," he said. Newsweek was the magazine he liked. His look was one of betrayal.

"This is the death of your innocence," I said.

I do not know if studying Authority Base transfers later to skill at asking tough questions of writers. But I do know students almost always come out of the unit with increased respect for the reporting in the magazines they don't like and increased skepticism of the magazines they do. If all I'm accomplishing is producing new fans for *Truckin'*, *Wrestling World* or *Star*, then that alone is a contribution to freedom of expression, isn't it? Taste may perish, but at least diversity will endure.

Author's Note: A full discussion of Authority Base will appear in a book in progress tentatively titled *What's This About Really?* to be published by Longman (probably fall 1992).

# Newspapers and Citizenship:

## Young Adults' Subjective Experience of the Newspaper Form

by Kevin G. Barnhurst and Ellen Wartella

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# Newspapers and Citizenship: Young adults' Subjective Experience of the Newspaper Form

by Kevin G. Barnhurst and Ellen Wartella

Paper presented to the Qualitative Studies Division, AEJMC annual convention, Boston, August, 1991.

## Abstract

American newspaper executives and conservative scritics complain that young adults who don't read newspapers and lack a knowledge of basic facts may be unprepared to become informed citizens. Studies also correlate newspaper reading with political interest. Young readers, who begin with comics and turn to newspapers for entertainment, do not find political news meaningful. This study explored what the newspaper means to young adults. Some 164 college students wrote autobiographies of their newspaper experiences. Using qualitative and demographic methods, this analysis constructs a composite narrative of how young adults are introduced to newspapers as children, interact with them in the school years, and eventually become regular users. Although they acknowledge the received definition of newspapers as factual sources for citizens, young adults experience the newspaper as a ritual, an icon, and a tool. They consider the factgs in newspapers boring because they deal with contexts unrelated to their lives.

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# Newspapers and citizenship: Young adults' subjective experience of the newspaper form

Kevin G. Barnhurst and Ellen Wartella

Since the 1960s newspaper readership has been declining. In 1970 U.S. daily newspaper circulation fell below the number of households for the first time this century, and according to Bogart (1989) the gap is widening. A Simmons Market Research Bureau survey (1988) found that from 1967 to 1987 the number of Americans over eighteen who reported having read a newspaper "yesterday" declined from 76 to 65 percent, with the largest decline (20 percent) among young adults eighteen to twenty-four years old. At those ages newspaper use tends to increase, but in the past decade young adults have not moved into the newspaper habit as did earlier generations of Americans. "We have seen that the downward trends in newspaper readership are marked among younger people," Bogart (1989) concludes in his summary of readership surveys. "It is essential for newspapers to reverse these trends of they wish to remain a mass medium a generation hence" (p. 345).

Recent conservative commentary raises similar concerns about young adults. Alan Bloom's The Closing of the American Mind (1987) portrays today's college students as uninterested in and ignorant of political and civic issues. Ravitch and Finn, in What Do Our 17 Year Olds Know? (1987), argue that young adults know and care little about political candidates, major events depicted in the news media, and basic facts of history, civics, and geography. They cite a survey of 7,800 high school juniors which found fewer than a third who could name the half-century when the Civil War was fought and even fewer who could identify Magna Carta.

According to Hirsch (1987), a citizenry ignorant of public and civic affairs cannot continue to learn and will not become productive in society. After finding that Southern California high school and college students couldn't name the U.S. presidents since World War II, Stein (1983) declared these young people "not mentally prepared to continue the society, because they basically do not understand [it] enough to value it" (p. 19). As former U.S. education secretary William Bennett lamented, "Democracy cannot endure if ignorance prevails" (in Sanoff, 1987, p. 8).

The accumulated evidence from scholarly audience research does tie newspaper reading to political involvement. The studies indicate that frequent newspaper readers, especially those under thirty, are more likely to vote in elections. Bogart (1989) argues that political interest, education level, and newspaper reading are interrelated. Just as fewer young adults have become newspaper readers, so would fewer be expected to vote. According to Census Bureau figures, only 36 percent of those younger than twenty-five reported registering and voting in the 1988 elections, compared to 57 percent of all eligible voters.

Americans have also become less supportive of the press. In a 1990 Gallup survey for the Times Mirror Company (reported in Robinson and Ornstein, 1990), more Americans questioned the independence, accuracy, and fairness of news organizations in 1990 (62 percent) than in 1985 (53 percent). Bogart (1989) concludes that "among youngsters, reading the paper goes with understanding and support of freedom of the press. As we look at their opinions, their knowledge of public affairs, and their media habits, it is apparent that the future of democratic institutions is linked to the continuing vitality of newspaper reading" (pp. 345-46).

Although they reach similar conclusions, the evidence of audience research does not necessarily support the arguments of conservative critics such as Bloom and Hirsch. Whitney and Wartella (1989) argue that levels of knowledge can be viewed with alarm or with complacency, depending on how they get measured. Most conservative commentators measure knowledge by recall of historical names, dates, and places. But knowledge may be defined more broadly as education accumulated over time. The percentage of Americans completing college is higher today than in any period, suggesting that public knowledge may have reached an all-time high. Whitney and Wartella conclude that forgetting "facts" about civic affairs and historic events doesn't necessarily connote that young adults lack public knowledge.

Nor do "facts" attract young people to newspapers. In the past decade a number of surveys of children, adolescents, and young adults have measured what content they prefer and what uses and gratifications they receive from the newspaper (summarized in Bogart, 1983 and 1989). According to Bogart (1989), the first content most American children attend to is the comics. They get introduced to the newspaper by their parents but do not become regular newspaper readers until adolescence, typically in the late high school years. Then they sustain an interest more in horoscopes, advice columns, fashion features, media news, and the like than in public affairs news stories. Their preference for "entertainment" over "hard news" continues through the young adult years, according to Bogart. This pattern does not necessarily disappear in adulthood. Comics and similar fare sustain a powerful audience for newspapers, anecdotal evidence suggests (Jones, 1991). For news articles, McAdams found the only good predictor of readership was the reader's prior interest in the topic (cited in Stepp, 1991, p. 22).

To attract younger readers, newspapers began in the 1980s to redesign their pages. The changes were a reaction against what Barnhurst (1991) calls "the long journalism." Beginning in the 1960s journalists distanced themselves from individual citizens by writing extended articles on problems or "issues," feeding the impression that newspapers report only bad news. "Although it is not so much the negative events as it is the negative meanings that readers find oppressive, their objections have spurred on the effort to make the news at least look better" (Barnhurst, 1991, p. 110). But these cosmetic changes ignored how newspapers relate to citizenship.

The question goes to the heart of journalism: Whom do reporters serve, how do newspapers get used, and what makes the press significant in public life? The answers cannot be found by measuring trends in newspaper circulation or fact retention. Newspapers are social objects, not mere compendia. They play a role in daily rituals (Carey, 1989). They also serve as significant icons (Panofsky, 1956). And their utility goes beyond just the factual (Berelson, 1954). At issue is the cultural meaning of newspapers. Do American youths view the newspaper as a repository of facts, necessary to responsible citizenship? If so, why don't they read newspapers? How do they experience the newspaper? What role does it play in their social growth? What does it symbolize for them? And how do the shrinking number who acquire the newspaper habit describe the process? In sum, what does the newspaper mean to young American citizens?

## The study

One way people make meaning or sense of their lives is by constructing narratives, telling stories about themselves and their world (Coster, 1989; Lyotard, 1984). In the first two decades of this century, sociologists at the University of Chicago devised a method for studying what the media meant in their subjects' lives (see Wartella, 1987, for a review). They employed this methodology, called the life history technique, in several early studies of media and youth, most notably Blumer's classic work Movies and Conduct (1933). The life history technique allows subjects to respond in their own words. Through written essays they can narrate the stories of how they experience a medium and how they understand its role in their lives. Denzin (1989) locates this technique as one of several interpretive methodologies with a long history in symbolic interactionist approaches to sociology and more recent postmodern ethnographic research.

The study reported here uses the life history methodology to probe young adults' subjective experiences with the newspaper. The intent is to explore their memories of the role of newspapers over the course of their young lives, to examine how newspapers functioned for them, and in particular to analyze the significance of the newspaper in their knowledge about the world. During the fall 1989 and spring 1990 semesters, we asked volunteers to complete personal biographies of their newspaper experiences. The exact directions were adapted from Blumer (1933) as follows:

> This essay is part of a study of college students' experiences with newspapers. One way to find out how people feel about newspapers is to ask them. Consequently, we are asking you to write an account or autobiography of your newspaper experiences, beginning with your earliest recollections and carrying the life history to today.
>
> To ensure frankness in writing one's experiences it is suggested that a completely anonymous relationship be established. When typing the autobiography, put your name and the number from the top of this sheet on a cover sheet. Put only the number from this sheet on the top of each page of your autobiography. In this way, the professor will not know the authors of the separate autobiographies.
>
> This is a scientific study. Its value depends upon the accuracy of the materials gathered. You are asked to be conscientious, truthful, and frank. Don't try to dress up your account in a literary fashion -- write naturally. Please don't exaggerate in any of your descriptions; do not invent or make up experiences. Be scrupulously honest. Don't feel any restraints in writing

> truly and frankly your intimate personal experiences -- arrangements are made to preserve your anonymity.

After writing their essays, the volunteers completed a brief questionnaire on demographics, family environment and media use. The study thus incorporates both qualitative and quantitative methods. The focus of this report is the qualitative analysis of the college students' newspaper autobiographies. The survey then supplements their narratives with data on their media use, family environment, and demographics background.

The study secured 164 autobiographical essays of young adult college students' newspaper experiences. This is not a representative sample of all young adults, and as such it may be viewed as an initial exploration for future study of this age group. The sample is drawn from undergraduates at a large midwestern university. The majority of the students (79 percent) are majors in communication. The participants volunteered from three classes: an introductory communications class for non-majors, a required skills class for journalism majors, and an elective lecture/theory course for advertising, journalism, and media studies majors. The sample is biased toward upperclassmen; juniors and seniors constitute 58 percent of the respondents. Their average age is twenty, a majority (69 percent) are females, and 16 percent are minority students, predominantly black.

The students come from fairly well-educated backgrounds. Among their mothers, 69 percent have at least some college education and 50 percent are college graduates. Of their fathers, 74 percent completed some college and 39 percent attended graduate or professional school. Most of the fathers (82 percent) are in such middle- and upper-middle-class occupations as academics, professionals, business managers or proprietors, or farm owners.

We also took measures of their media use and their attention to news. As might be expected, they are attentive to the mass media as well as to news outlets. The mean number of days per week they report was 5.03 for reading a newspaper and 3.27 for watching TV news. For a large number of these students (60 percent), their newspaper reading consists of the weekday student newspaper (which contains national and international news items). Another 30 percent of the students take a newspaper from their home city, Chicago.

The students are oriented more toward audio-video than to print media. On average, they report slightly more than one hour with TV "yesterday" (mean = 66 minutes), slightly less than one hour with radio (mean = 58 minutes), and an average 70 minutes with records and tapes. By comparison, they report spending on average 22 minutes "yesterday" with the newspaper. They also report reading an average of only one book for pleasure and three magazines in the previous month. On the other hand, they attended on average 2.8 movies and watched 2.9 movies on video and rented 2.13 movies for their VCR in the previous month. They purchased on average 2.95 records or tapes and attended 1.21 concerts in the previous month as well.

Thus the sample is comprised of well-educated, middle- and upper-middle-class college students in their early twenties. Although biased toward a more educated segment, the sample is representative not of all young adults but certainly of those who have been targeted not only by the critics of public ignorance, such as Bennett and Bloom, but also by the commentators concerned over readership, such as the newspaper executives cited by Bogart. The students are oriented toward the mass media by virtue of not only their interest in communication study but also their media use. Although they are attentive to news media, they show a much higher proclivity to attend to audio-visual media and predominantly entertainment programming. The analyses that follow identify these students by gender, race, and their newspaper reading level. We categorized newspaper reading as follows: Habitual readers reported reading a newspaper six or seven days a week, frequent readers reported five days a week, and occasional readers four or fewer days a week.

## The analysis

Following Blumer, we used an inductive technique for analyzing the newspaper biographies. First, the authors read each essay and independently constructed a list of recurring themes. We then agreed on a joint list and defined each theme. Next, we again read the essays to select examples and elaborations of the themes identified inductively. A graduate student also read and coded each essay for the presence or absence of the themes. Intercoder reliability is difficult to assess, since we used the criterion of intercoder consensus, such that the readers needed to agree that an essay showed evidence of a particular theme.

Our analysis attempts to construct a composite narrative from the autobiographies, but without losing specific details or significant variations. The autobiographers uniformly divided their newspaper experience into three age epochs: how they were introduced to the newspaper as children; how they used newspapers during their public school years; and how they did or did not make the transition to regular newspaper users in late adolescence or the college years. Finally, we describe how they discussed their present use of the newspaper and their impression of its influence on them today.

## Childhood

A number of the students began by pointing out how little they had paid attention to newspapers. They reported they had never before given the newspaper form any thought. Some inferred from this observation that newspapers were unimportant or at least invisible to them. A few said that writing the autobiography forced them to consider newspapers for the first time.

> Having grown up in their presence, it's very difficult for me to put my finger on a certain, distinct time period when I actually started reading them.
>
> -Minority female frequent reader

As this example illustrates, the students could remember neither their first glimpse nor their first use of a newspaper. The few students who remembered a specific first encounter were the exception:

> My first distinct remembrance of the newspaper's impact was when Elvis Presley died in 1977, when I was just seven years old. My mother, who loved The King was irate when she read in the newspaper that Elvis died of a drug overdose. She wanted to send a letter to Bob Greene, the journalist who wrote the article, and tell him he was lying. At that moment, I sensed her mistrust of the print media. I didn't understand that my mother didn't want to believe what she read in the newspaper, even though it was true.
>
> -White female habitual reader

Having stated that the newspaper played almost no real role in their lives, many still went on to write of the myriad uses they had or witnessed for newspapers in childhood. The pattern of recollection was in the "used to" voice -- many past acts seen as a routine or regular event: every morning, every time I did a thing, every Sunday -- followed by statements in the imperfect tense: we always did, or I used to do such-and-such with the newspaper. Seventy (43 percent) of the essays explicitly identified the newspaper as a constant part of the household background. In a few cases the routine itself was memorable or unusual:

> . . . early in the morning my grandmother read the Chicago Sun-Times out loud to my grandfather in the kitchen everyday and always made comments about how dangerous and violent the world was as she read it in the newspaper. Although my grandfather is illiterate, he was still interested about what was going on in the world.
>
> -Minority female occasional reader

The newspaper was a persistent backdrop to a variety of activities -- artwork, family time, housework, do-it-yourself projects, and entertainment pastimes. Most of the uses for newsprint mentioned in the essays were predictable to the point of cliche: hitting the dog, putting it in shoes with holes, and the like. Few were at all unusual, but some implied that using the newspaper for anything other than reading news was odd:

> My parents have always found bizarre uses for the newspaper as well. My mother, a sincere plant lover, likes to spread newspaper over our countertops to shield them from soil when she repots her plants.
>
> -White female frequent reader

The early uses of newspapers were of three types: as an implement (present in 70 essays), an art medium (mentioned in 56 essays), and as a protective covering (present in 47 essays). These uses introduced a first frustration with newspapers: the ink rubs off. Each of the uses also presented a fundamental contradiction of the form. Newsprint stains the hands but is used to protect against stains. Newspapers are useful information, but they are also mute implements, used without irony for cleaning and for punishment. Utility was an important theme, and so was its contradiction: art is not utilitarian, but newsprint is useful as a cheap medium in art. To a child artist armed with clay putty, the ink rubbing off can be desirable as well as frustrating. Some autobiographies illustrated the paradox by juxtaposition.

Most of the parents did not encourage their children to read the paper. Despite the low frequency of parental encouragement of children's use of newspapers in the autobiographies, 46 percent of the students reported in the survey that their parents encouraged them "strongly" or "somewhat" to read newspapers as they grew up. By contrast, the survey data showed that nearly all parents (90 percent) encouraged their children to read books. Only a few autobiographers reported that a parent read to or with them, or asked them to read aloud, from the newspaper.

> Sitting down on the love seat together, Mom would start with "The Peanuts" and wouldn't stop until we'd finished Ripley's Believe It or Not, reading even my least favorite ones like Tarzan.
>
> -White female habitual reader

But for many of the students, the newspaper was the source of conflict. Eight students specifically cited moments of anger toward parents who engaged in this adult activity. From an early age students expressed resentment that their parents spent time with the newspaper, rather than paying attention to them. Even some of the positive memories were poignant clues to disappointment.

> . . . my grandfather would read her the funnies while she looked at the pictures. Often, when he would read Sniffles or Nancy and Sluggo, he would substitute my mother's name. My mother would get upset and say, "Come on, Dad! It doesn't say that!" My folks never read me the paper.
>
> -White male frequent reader

> The newspaper seemed to be an obstacle between my parents and I . . . . I just remember times when I wanted to talk to my parents, but they were more interested in the paper than me. It made me feel like an outsider. Especially when they discussed the news of the day.
>
> -White female frequent reader

The newspaper was for adults only, according to nearly half (46 percent) of the autobiographies. The newspaper was an icon of adulthood, a form closed to the students as children.

> Watching TV as a child, I remember newspapers on television were a sign of a businessman or intellectual. . . . I saw these things but never really thought these people read the paper. I never considered that newspapers contained important, recent information. On the television screen and even in our house they seemed to me just props, things that were supposed to be there to make the scene, our lives, complete.
>
> -White female habitual reader

> There was a long period of time when I considered papers as difficult and designed for the minds of adults. Newspapers were written for those in society that had money. And in this society adults have all the money. I felt that newspapers weren't for me and I wasn't for newspapers so I never read them.
>
> -Minority male frequent reader

The occasional student reported imitating parents by pretending to read the paper, but the form of the paper presented problems. As the students began to use the newspaper -- usually the comics -- they found another frustration: its size. The pages are too large and won't stay together for children. This makes the newspaper useful as a drop cloth or tool but inaccessible as information.

> The other local paper was the standard form . . . . I hated that paper because it was so difficult for my short arms to turn the pages to look at the pictures.
>
> -White male habitual reader

The newspaper also defined power relationships and dynamics in the home. Thirty-nine of the autobiographies explicitly stated that fathers laid first claim on the newspaper. Some children were punished for first use. Other students reported fighting with siblings over the funny papers. Access to the newspaper reflected the pecking order in the family: men first, then women, then older or stronger or male children, and so forth.

Almost all of these memories were of a continuity -- the students excluded anything routine from their definition of important or significant experience. The fact that the ritual happened every day or every week, of itself, made the newspaper a non-event. Instead, the newspaper was like breathing, always there but rarely acknowledged, or like time itself, marking other events, pervasive but ultimately ignored. A few students made the connection to time explicit or identified the newspaper with the flow of history:

> As I recall, I associated the newspaper with the summer months. It was in the summer that I would wait for parents to arrive home. The paperboy would always deliver the newspaper right before my mother arrived home. To me, it symbolized a time of day.
>
> -Minority female occasional reader

> It was then that I noticed a strange thing that my mother did with newspapers, at least it seemed strange to me at the time. Around the time I was doing my work, President Reagan was shot. I noticed that my mother took the newspaper from that day and put it in that same closet where my projects were. Soon I discovered that she had kept several papers there, including the paper from the day of John F. Kennedy's assassination. I asked her why she did that, and she said that she wanted to keep these papers because they were a part of her history.
>
> -White female occasional reader

But for the most part, the students discounted their daily encounters with the newspaper, usually because the variety of uses at first excluded information. Newspapers are for getting facts, they seemed to say, and anything else doesn't qualify as a real use of the form.

School years

During their years in the public schools, the students' motives for using the newspaper fell into two broad categories: external pressures and internal motivation. As the students entered middle childhood, their parents began to pressure them more to read the newspaper. Some reported that the experience was negative.

> When I became a pre-teen I remember my father always getting on me about reading the paper.
>
> -Minority female occasional reader

> Yet the way she would tell me would be in the form of a yell. Quite strange, but it was true. It made it sound like somewhat of a punishment because of the manner in which she used to tell me to read. Yelling, like I caused or got into trouble for something I've done.
>
> -Minority female occasional reader

> Unfortunately, they were not very positive in encouraging me. More often than not, their encouragement took the form of guilt or insults.
>
> -White female habitual reader

Besides pressures at home, students were pushed to use the newspaper at school. They reported several types of home assignments that required consulting the newspaper. These included school and Boy Scout work -- following current events or the stock market for classes or merit badges in civics or business. Overall, thirty biographies mentioned specific cases of such uses. Some students who complained of coercion nevertheless acquired an interest in civic affairs and a pattern of regular newspaper use. But they did not see coercion as the cause of their later interest.

At the time, they still considered the newspaper boring, and some recounted ways they avoided assignments. These introduce an element repeated in a number of autobiographies -- admissions or confessions of dishonesty or cheating.

> Instead of reading the paper, I would simply find ten words from the dictionary at random and write down the definitions.
>
> -Minority female frequent reader

> I, being the lazy eighth grader I was, called my father, who was a stock broker, toll free, thus avoiding the use of newspapers at least half the time.
>
> -White male frequent reader

The students also found internal motivations for using the newspaper. Some discovered or joined activities to make money from newspapers. Besides the paper route, recycling was mentioned frequently. A few referred to a parent's newspaper income. One student reported his own enterprise:

> I would scrounge up a quarter and duck into a corner restaurant that had a newspaper dispenser. After inserting my quarter I took all the remaining newspapers and trudged off to school. Outside, on the playground, I would sell all of my extra papers to other students who had also forgotten about our Friday assignment. Sometimes I would make five dollars! -- my first experience with the paper as a profit-making tool, you might say.
>
> -White male habitual reader

The constant encounters with the newspaper -- rolling them for delivery, bundling them for recycling -- occasionally led to an interest in the content. But usually not. Most found the news completely unrelated to their lives. A few students reported losing interest even in comics, but others said that comics were the only newspaper content to hold their interest. During this middle period of youth, the remainder of the newspaper they considered boring.

> Comics were, and still are, the most important and satisfying part of the newspaper for me. I'm sure you're cringing in disgust right about now, so allow me to lay one thing to rest: "Personally, newspapers are little more than vehicles for the funnies." There, it's out.
>
> -White Male occasional reader

The students' regret over their interest in comics is interesting. Their apologetic tone may reflect values taught by parents and by newspaper homework assigned in school -- that newspapers are for facts and information. The one type of content that intrinsically motivated them to pick up the newspaper they did not consider valid reading.

In contrast to the money grubbing, duplicity, and boredom associated with newspapers, one news event stood out -- the time the student's picture or name first appeared in the newspaper. As opposed to the pattern of repetitive and largely ignored use, making the news was a specifically remembered and valued moment. But for some students, especially the few who starred in sports, that moment itself blended into a ritual pattern if their pictures or names appeared frequently in the paper.

> But by the end of that year, I, myself, was in the newspaper story for the very first time. That led me to start skimming through the other sections of the paper. I still was not really "reading" it, but I was at least interested in all the photos and large, bold print headings.
>
> -Minority female habitual reader

When the students themselves or people and places they knew or cared about were included in the news content, they responded by reading intently and scanning for similar content. Some students identified local news that connected their lives to the larger world as an important cause of their regular interest in newspapers.

### Transition to adulthood

For many students, the newspaper was an image closely tied to maturity. Their autobiographies were sometimes built around a central struggle to achieve adulthood.

> I was just genuinely glad that I was past the [sixth grade] level that newspapers were written at -- for some reason it was very important to me to be able to read the paper . . .
>
> -Minority female frequent reader

> I don't know about the other kids in my class, but having my own copy of the newspaper made me feel real grown-up.
>
> -White female occasional reader

The students denigrated any use for newspapers that was not purely informational, implying that the correct use is reading hard news. Nineteen autobiographies explicitly defined the newspaper as a repository of facts. The students could excuse themselves for not reading the news at an early age, but as they got older they became very uncomfortable with their failure to use the newspaper as information. Fifty-five of the essays describe specific attempts to use the newspaper as a young adult, but with mixed success.

One reason information was at the core of the students' attitudes toward newspapers was that not knowing facts excluded them from readership. The newspaper was a closed system of knowledge, accessible only to adults who had enough information to understand it.

> Every once in a while, I tried to pick up a newspaper and read some of it. Unfortunately, due to my lack of knowledge in many of the events, past and present, of our world, I found it very difficult to follow the articles especially on the front page of the paper.
>
> -Minority female occasional reader

A repentant attitude for not reading content sometimes led to a sort of baptism into adulthood. The pattern of guilt springing from parental nagging, cheating in school, and self-criticism for supposedly misusing the newspaper led in eleven cases to a climax somewhat akin to religious conversion. The catalyst for change varied. Occasionally it was a class project or parental example. A few reported that the space shuttle explosion caught their interest. One explained that television coverage led to reading a related newspaper account.

> I came across a headline that interested me. It was about child abuse. This was something I had heard about on television, and because I was familiar with the subject, I decided to read the article.
>
> I felt proud of myself that I had read something from the "front" pages of the newspaper, this was something I'd never done before. I was stunned from the content of the article . . . .
>
> This was a breakthrough for me. I began to read more articles, if the article interested me.
>
> -Minority female frequent reader

The experience seems to have the attendant self-righteousness of religious conversion -- I'm informed, I can't believe some people don't read the newspaper.

> For the first time in my life, I actually felt well-informed about the important changes occurring in the world. . . . I found myself preaching to others about what I was learning, and I also felt disappointment and frustration upon discovering how ill-informed others are about people, places, and events which I now saw as important knowledge that everyone should possess.
>
> -White female frequent reader

The feelings students expressed toward newspapers and non-readers after the conversion reveal what the newspaper icon signified for them. They considered themselves smarter and more worldly. They defined themselves as adults.

> The feelings I associate with newspapers are mature, adult, intelligent feelings. I feel I am old enough and smart enough now to read the paper and learn about world occurrences unlike some lower-class, uneducated people who aren't concerned with the rest of the world -- only their lives and happiness.
>
> -White female habitual reader

> It sounds a bit strange but I think of an elite group when I picture someone reading a quality paper. I feel that more educated people read papers while the less educated just sit back and watch the news on television.
>
> -White female frequent reader

Other students evidently followed a less dramatic process when learning to use the paper: conquering one section (such as comics) at a time or one type of content (such as sports) or form (such as pictures). Some students started by reading everything, but that strategy quickly dropped away, and they ended up picking and choosing according to taste and personal interest. Only the rare exception reported reading only hard news.

Those who had integrated the newspaper into their lives continued the pattern of frustration with the form. Their complaints focused on waste and economy.

> I read it from cover to cover, or at least flipped through the pages, because I wanted to get my money's worth.
>
> -White female habitual reader

> I would like to subscribe to a larger paper, but I cannot afford to pay for fifty more pages of print that I have not the time to read on a daily basis.
>
> -White female occasional reader

But they were also habituated. Several mentioned the discomfort they felt upon missing a day's newspaper. A few compared reading a newspaper to watching a soap opera. Some said they felt embarrassed about their addiction, but they hated to miss a day.

> Today, it is a regular habit to read the morning news. The only time I deviate from this routine is on vacations. Even then I feel almost "left behind" from the progressing world. Information is the key to success, and I plan to be very successful.
>
> -White female habitual reader

However, many of the students had not made the transition and remained outsiders, unable to decode the form and struggling with the notion that reading the paper meant reading all of it. If everything was of equal importance and value, they remarked, then there was too much, and they didn't know how to pick and choose.

> The sheer volume of the Times intimidates me, however, and I often avoid it because of this. I don't know if my roommate reads all of it, but I would doubt it, because I don't see how anyone could read that much each day and still find time for homework.
>
> -White male frequent reader

Other students acknowledged their limited use of newspapers but considered skimming sufficient. Or they simply rejected newspaper reading or keeping informed as an important activity. But some voiced regret about not reading newspapers.

> I do not care much about what is happening in other parts of the world. That kind of information does not interest me because I live in Homewood, Illinois, not Moscow!
>
> -Minority female occasional reader

> Quite frankly, world economics, politics, and foreign affairs don't interest me, so I don't read articles relating to these topics. Perhaps in time I will.
>
> -White male occasional reader

Some non-readers were even more explicit about their disappointment and expressed a determination to change. A few reported forcing themselves to read the paper daily in an effort to acquire the habit, in spite of their negative outlook on the content.

> I seem to have a great lack of motivation when it comes to actually reading and paying attention to what I am reading. I would like to change this about myself, because I think it is important to understand what is going on in the world. My outlook on newspapers throughout my life has been virtually negative, and I am looking to make it positive.
>
> -White female habitual reader

The students were for the most part not aware of the sexual politics surrounding newspaper use, although several remarked on the family pecking order mentioned earlier. One white female habitual reader took note of the pattern at school, where she reported only boys read newspapers in study hall. The newspaper was sometimes explicitly identified as a male domain, adopted by one white female frequent reader, for example, to please a boyfriend.

Occasionally, an autobiography expressed resentment toward the structure of power relationships that surround the newspaper. But even those who were hostile or who didn't read the newspaper assumed that others paid attention. So the medium retained some significance.

> Newspaper reading has affected my knowledge of the world because the U.S. government has proven to be corrupt, based on power, world domination, and most of all, white supremacy.
>
> -Minority male habitual reader

### Influences

Many students conveyed the attitude that the newspaper was not important to them or their current lives. Twenty-three of them specifically denied the newspaper's influence.

> I think that I can truly say, without error, that I have never changed my style of dress, my speech patterns, or a single strand of hair on my head because of something that I read in the paper. . . . Perhaps it is said, but the paper really means very little to me -- and, I believe, many of my peers.
>
> -White male occasional reader

Despite the denials that newspapers influenced them, fifty-seven of the autobiographies recounted at least one specific case of that influence. The newspaper affected many of their choices: the clothes they wore, the movies and television they watched, and the purchases they made. Individual students also reported imitating personal hygiene and dating activities suggested by newspapers. Several students recounted specific experiments occasioned by newspaper reading.

> It directed me to set throw pillows in a circle with two candles and Chinese food. I thought it was a sure win. . . . Well, I got the date but it was nothing like the article. We were exact opposites and I didn't even like Chinese food. I later thought how one little article influenced me to go through so much trouble.
>
> -White female frequent reader

In their story of entering adulthood, twenty-two students ended by expressing a growing skepticism or even cynicism toward newspapers. Some had averted danger by reading newspaper reports and identified these warnings as a source of press power. But others complained about abuses of that power. They reported being desensitized by news coverage. A few cited examples of news that victimized or endangered its subjects. Some criticized the information in the news sections of the newspaper, pointing to their own experiences with unreliable or incorrect news.

> . . . the seriousness of this charge was blown clearly out of proportion and caused a lot of worry for a lot of people. It reminds me that the media play an important part in victimizing the individual.
>
> -White male frequent reader

> I felt that I knew so much more of what was going on behind the scene of the trial itself than what was actually printed in the newspaper . . . . not giving the entire story was just as bad as giving the wrong story. This was when I realized the great power of the printed media.
>
> -White female occasional reader

These strong reactions emerged when the news touched their lives. News connected with things close to them could also have a powerful, positive effect. They reported that reading the newspaper helped build empathy and prompt behavior change. The key was how the news affected their emotions.

> When I read that . . . 90 percent of the women on campus are afraid to walk alone at night, then I changed my behavior. Whenever I am walking home at night I cross the street to avoid passing women whether they are alone or with someone else.
>
> -White male frequent reader

Many students were unwilling to acknowledge that newspapers influenced their opinions. One minority male frequent reader gave an extended account of how newspapers affected his political thinking. But most students apparently brought their ideas to the newspaper, seeking confirmation for what they already believed. They didn't consider using facts or evidence from the newspaper in conversation as a form of influence.

Most drew an implicit barrier between their own behaviors and attitudes and the facts found in newspapers. Their logic went something like this: The newspaper couldn't influence them because it supplied only information. The information used for dating (on movies, restaurants, concerts, and other events), planning purchases (on stores, sales, and styles), or being a citizen (on politicians, taxes, and public policies) is factual. Facts are objective and outside the realm of influence. The newspaper is thus like a telephone book or a card catalog, useful but not influential.

Besides the uncritical stance, what is striking in their essays is the high level of contradiction. Many students denied the influence of newspapers immediately before or after describing memorable examples of that influence.

> I have never imitated anything that I read in the newspaper. I may have copied some clothing or make-up styles, but that is about it.
>
> -Minority female occasional reader
>
> Sometimes I will feel very sad and somber if I read an article about someone who had died in an accident of some type. . . . After reading these types of articles I . . . am cautious and aware of how I am driving. . . .
>
> Newspapers have never affected my behavior, at least not to my knowledge.
>
> -White female habitual reader
>
> . . . the newspaper has made me angry . . . Articles . . . have made my blood boil. I disagree with the content . . . . reading the paper relaxes me.
>
> The newspaper really hasn't affected my behavior at all. . . . I have never been influenced by the newspaper on dates except in that I have used it as a source of what to do on a date . . . . I have, however, imitated the newspapers in that I have taken a position on an issue, used the facts I obtained from the paper, and argued much like an editorial writer would. Otherwise, I do not mimic the newspaper in any way. . . . This medium doesn't influence my life that much.
>
> -White female occasional reader

The newspaper as a form seems to live as a contradiction. It is a lowly object that confers status. One white female habitual reader said that newspaper reading gives her more depth than television does, but then she reported skimming only the headlines. The object as an icon, not the facts gleaned from it, made the difference. A white female frequent reader said she felt more intelligent after completing the autobiography because she was more connected with the newspaper than she had realized. Others voiced a recognition of the newspaper's ritual significance.

> I didn't realize how important newspapers are to me until I wrote this essay. To me, they have always been a part of my life, and like most things you grow up with, the role they play in your life is not always apparent.
>
> -Minority female frequent reader

## Conclusions

This narrative summarizes the process by which young adults acquire the newspaper habit. Their reports are consistent with survey data for the general population at their age. From their early interest in comics, their newspaper use measures their social growth through the transition into young adulthood, usually in late high school or college. Compared with the survey method, this study offers greater detail and insight into their perceptions. They appear to experience the newspaper in three ways, as a ritual, as an icon, and as a tool.

Rituals mark the passing of time and place events into the cycle of life and the round of history. The students' earliest recollections signal the ritual quality of newspapers by speaking in the imperfect tense. But ritual also exists as a contradiction, its power hidden by routine. After denying much of a role for newspapers, the students recounted many ways in which the newspaper punctuated their lives. These activities, although not granted much status, at least brought newspapers into the daily round. Only after experience, or in some cases reflection, did the newspaper ritual seem significant. The habituated students expressed discomfort at missing a day's news, and others regretted not reading the paper regularly. For some students, writing the autobiography illuminated and resolved the contradiction between their belief that newspapers are unimportant and their daily experiences with the form.

An icon contains the representation of a visible object and signifies a range of contexts associated with its form. As an icon, the newspaper exists in an adult setting. The students noted how its size, for example, excluded them as children. In childhood, they identified the newspaper as a prop for grown-ups. Some imitated their parents reading and others expressed resentment at being excluded. During the school years, parents and teachers urged maturity on them with the newspaper, and they resisted by cheating on newspaper assignments, in essence, refusing to grow up.

Icons also reveal the structure of power relationships, and the newspaper is no exception. The students associated it with conflict involving parents and siblings. The newspaper became the focus of the students' struggle to achieve adulthood, an icon of maturity. Those who used the newspaper to gain access to adult status expressed disdain for the nonreader. Many of the students remained unaware of the politics surrounding the icon, but a few expressed hostility toward newspapers, citing sexual or racial grounds. For readers and non-readers, friendly or not, the newspaper was a significant icon, capable of conferring status by its mere possession.

Unlike icons, tools are assumed to be neutral and functional, the interface with a physical world. In their early years, the students reported many interactions with the physical form of the newspaper, which functioned as a tool to maintain cleanliness, obedience, and order. Even as an art supply, the newspaper was more functional than aesthetic. Like other conveniences, a tool is also a commodity. During the school years, the newspaper played an important role as an implement for entertainment and for making money. These activities were associated with duplicity and guilt. After the transition to young adulthood, the newspaper became a tool for daily information, and the students predictably entered into a practical critique of its cost and efficiency.

Utility is inherent in the definition of the newspaper as a source of facts necessary to citizenship. The students, for the most part, echoed that definition. But their experience with the newspaper as an icon, ritual, and tool seemed to contradict the wisdom of the accepted definition, leaving the students in a quandary.

One difficulty must lie in the definition of facts. If it takes facts to understand the newspaper, then one might reasonably suggest (as some conservative critics do) that students be required to learn and remember more. But which facts are important? The difficulty springs not so much from an ignorance of names, dates, and places as from a disagreement about what matters. Young adults seem ready to allow that facts from Washington are important, but they also find them boring. Most facts in a newspaper fall outside of their knowledge, and so the news is foreign and meaningless to them. What does interest them is the people and places they know. As long as their facts and the newspaper's facts remain mutually exclusive sets, they are unlikely to become readers.

A second difficulty lies in the definition of citizenship. If a citizen attends to the coverage of policies and candidates and then speaks out or votes, then newspaper executives are right to push for citizens to become readers. Citizenship is the context that makes news facts meaningful. Although they seek acceptance into the adult world, students must first be citizens of their families, neighborhoods, and schools. They are less prepared, if not unwilling, to make sense of municipal and state politics, because they cannot translate those events into the context of their lives. Newspapers have little appeal when they fail to validate the smallest jurisdictions, where citizens live out their lives.

As these difficulties imply, the future of an informed citizenry is a quandary made from the elements of narrative. When events stand on their own, as they do in many news reports, the facts aren't related to the stories of student's lives. It is not only that the news tells the story of white, middle-class males, but that it depends on a framework or context foreign to the students. News invokes the ideal or mythology of the individual as a power in democracy and as a creator of society. Students don't see themselves as citizens, participating in democracy. That is a story they identify as external to their experience. They are more likely to see themselves as consumers seeking pleasure in the way that the entertainment media position audiences. Nor does the move toward imposing large "issues" to explain facts and events speak to these young people. Their lives, and their stories, exist without any reference to these "issues" or newspaper meta-narratives about public affairs.

For the past ten years, when newspaper executives have acknowledged that young adults seem uninterested in "hard" news and prefer comics and "soft" news, they have tended to expand the content they think young people like, using soft news to make the "hard" news more palatable. By failing to address the underlying definitions of news facts and citizenship, this response fails to engage young adults' interest in civic and public affairs. It is a purely cosmetic solution. The pattern can be seen not only in the addition of soft features and children's "mini-pages" that are mostly fluff, but also in the move toward newspaper designs that are decorative and superficially attractive, mimicking television, which is a prime source of entertainment. To change how young adults experience the newspaper, we need to try a different tack.

One strategy might be to find a way to help young people see themselves as participants with the power to determine the course of public life. This would require a fundamental redefinition of facts and citizenship. The old categories of news (white heterosexual males in government, business, and sports) and features (women, children, and various minorities in homes, neighborhoods, churches, schools, and clubs) would have to go. The news that matters to young adults would no longer be classified as "other," segregated into a page or section, and assigned the lowest position in the visual hierarchy -- notably missing from the front page, for example. This strategy has already been reported by Stepp (1991). A number of newspapers have opened the definition of news to readers by inviting call-in feedback and to non-readers by running focus groups. The result has been a move to put lifestyle issues on the front page and to include the small "chicken-dinner" items readers submit.

Another strategy might be to find a way to help journalists tell stories that connect with the lives of young adults. At least since the 1960s, one segment of newspaper critics, early on called the new journalists, have asked for a change in the form for writing newspaper hard news. As Nancy Hicks Maynard (1988) recently wrote, journalists should cast stories in a narrative style that places facts in a meaningful -- that is understandable and memorable -- context. This style would necessarily provide a more subjective, personalized framework. In the place of the sterile "objectivity" of modernism, it would assert the validity of the subjective experience of both the writer/journalist and the reader/citizen.

These new strategies respond directly to the subjective experiences of young adults with the newspaper. They also respond to the call for an informed citizenry by expanding citizenship to include the social institutions outside politics as traditionally conceived. With these changes, the news might become consistent with the moments when students' lives connect with the larger public discourse, when they see themselves and their significant others as the subject of the news. Rather than defining information as something external to the young citizen, journalists could define knowledge as internal and personal. Journalism would then be an act, not of exploiting the experience of sources to make marketable stories, but of sharing narratives and expanding the public discourse to include all citizens, especially the young.

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# Mennonite Culture and Communication: How Media Use Shapes Identity

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## *Abstract*

This study addresses mass media use as shared experience in the daily life of Mennonites. In-depth interviews, participant observation, and use of primary and secondary sources revealed that accessing means of producing media and manipulating media as a commodity essential to the group are important strategies underlying Mennonite culture. Having preserved their religious/ethnicity amidst great social change, the Mennonites of Northwest Oklahoma experience life in the global village from within an electronically-connected clan.

## *Introduction*

The role of media in shaping society is very much a central concern in the study of mass communication. At issue are the long-term social consequences related to media use. In recent years, there has been a growing recognition that understanding of the relationship requires consideration of mass communication as interactive and interpretative processes (Schramm, 1983; Tuchman, 1988). The study of media uses and gratifications has been associated with media effect (Rosengren et al, 1974, Jeffres, 1983), and new research strategies employing qualitative methods at the individual level have reconceptualized the audience role (Libes, 1988; Lindlof, 1987; McQuail & Gurevitch, 1974). Yet not much progress has been made in understanding the links between the social-psychological factors of group life and mass media use in a theoretically informed and grounded fashion. It is the aim of this research to move forward along this line. By locating the research within the theories of group boundary maintenance developed by Frederick Barth (1969) and drawing on Robert Park's (1967 ) perspective of media, this study will employ qualitative methods to address the ways people use mass media in daily life and the relevancy of media use to group identity maintenance.

A general understanding of the relationship of mediated communication and religious/ethnic group culture is the purpose of the study. Although the importance of content in communication should not be ignored, the emphasis of this research is not on specific beliefs or opinions, neither those held by the group under study nor those generated by media. The emphasis, instead, is on members' personal accounts of how they incorporate media in their lives. The aim of this research is to connect, both empirically and conceptually, the relationship of Mennonite values and acculturation and mediated communication. This is an explanatory study. First the history of the development of the group is discussed then the part media play in shaping the group identity at present is developed. Specifically, the investigation seeks how Mennonites use media and how they adapt media to appropriate Mennonite traditions. The group studied are a small (1) religious/ethnic minority who are visible and distinctive as part of the total population mix in Northwest Oklahoma where the research was conducted.

## *Theoretical Overview*

Developing a comprehensive overview of this minimally researched subject was difficult, not only because of the scarcity of available literature, but because the investigation necessitated addressing two types of studies: (1) studies of Mennonites as a subculture, and (2) studies of homogeneous group interaction with mediated communication. Little research has been directed to either of these as substantive topics, neither has there been much publication on the theoretical aspects of mediated communication in the processes of group life.

## *Mennonites as a Subculture*

A major obstacle in studying Mennonites as a subculture is the difficulty in defining the group. Mennonite identification covers a broad spectrum of religious doctrine. Moreover, several ethnic subgroups can be found among Mennonites as a whole. Followers of the faith have been divided into several denominations that have been organized to form a continuum (Barclay, 1967; Fretz, 1977) ranging from those who reject technological advances and live in communal, closed congregations to those who ascribe to strict dress and behavior codes but associate marginally with the outside world through public education and employment, to those who integrate with the larger society and define their association as Mennonites through religious belief and practice (2). Among the latter are General Conference Mennonites and Mennonite Brethren. It is the more acculturated Mennonites who identify with the more liberal denominations that comprise the focus of this research.

The characteristics of these groups were presented in a pioneering work on Anabaptists published in 1975 by Kauffman and Harder. An extensive questionnaire distributed to a large sample served as the basis for this most comprehensive view of Mennonite social life to date. The study, which offered information on Mennonite norms and organization, has served as a benchmark for further substantive and theoretical research (Driedger & Kauffman, 1982). In particular, the only published study to date that addresses

Mennonites' relationship to mass communication, Umble's (1990) research on television's power to "cultivate" mainstream, or prevailing cultural attitudes in heavy viewers, is based on the data Kauffman and Harder (1982) collected. Umble (1990) found television viewing associated with moderate attitudes, while heavy viewing contributed to already liberalized perspectives.

Other analysts of Mennonite culture have identified various demographic characteristics of the group. Examples include: type of community, location, family, and occupation (Driedger, 1968), norms relating to consumption of alcohol (Currie et al, 1979), trends in intermarriage (Driedger et al, 1983), and divorce (Driedger et al 1985). While these studies showed demographic trends and identified changes in the characteristics of the group that were then aggregated and cited as affecting or affected by acculturation and/or assimilation, little of this research can be designated causally relevant or reveal how individuals conceive of their relationship to their culture. Through several survey studies (Driedger & Jacob, 1973; Weinstein et al, 1988; Kurokawa, 1969), information about attitudes has been found, but surveys are not designed to elicit information about underlying values, beliefs, and norms of conduct. Neither are they adequate sources of data on the processes that underlie attitude formation.

Sawatsky ( 1978) attempted to rectify such conceptual and methodological deficiencies through a study that found denominationalization had resulted in progressive assimilation of Mennonites in American society. His research suggested a linear mobility. Bolt and Roberts (1979) have criticized the Sawatsky (1978) study and offered an alternative explanation of Mennonite assimilation. Regardless of differences in findings, both Sawatsky (1978) and Bolt and Roberts (1979) have assumed assimilation as positive, unidimensional and linear; whereas, the essence of Mennonite identity is not integration but separation. Further, Mennonites have in some ways tended to survive better as Mennonites when society treated them with hostility than when they were accepted by society.

In contrast to this approach, Heatwole's (1974) research considered Mennonites as a part of pluralistic society. Separation of the group from society, he found, preserves the religious sect through attaching transcendental meaning to the distinctive values and culture of the religious group. This type of counteracting relationship between Mennonites and American society at large has been pointed out in a variety of articles (Redekop, 1974; Redekop & Hostetler, 1966; Newman, 1973). Yet in looking at the qualities that distinguish Mennonite groups, pluralist interpretations of Mennonites often overlook significant movement toward integration. Such studies also fail to look at interpretation of religious/ethnic groups from the viewpoint of their members.

An alternative to assimilation and pluralist approaches that does recognize the interactive processes of ethnicity has been incorporated in studies of Mennonites (Driedger, 1975; Kauffman, 1977; Bolt, 1979; Rose, 1988), which build on a theoretical perspective developed by Barth (1969). Barth (1969) considered the dynamic nature of ethnic boundaries to be the critical aspect of minority groups. His theory is action oriented allowing for expanding or contracting boundaries within groups. It is distinguished in its theme that ethnic groups are often built on interaction with other social systems. From Barth's perspective, it is not necessary for groups to depend on the absence of interaction to maintain identity. Interaction can actually support differences between groups. Boundaries persist despite a flow of personnel and information across them, and boundaries may also shift. Acculturation and assimilation are important considerations but represent only two of many types of boundary shifts. Studies of Mennonites emerging from this theoretical perspective have noted the importance of individuals' identification (Driedger, 1977), system linkages (Kauffman, 1977), institutional completeness (Bolt, 1979), and modern migration to urban areas (Rose, 1988).

Boundary maintenance as a conceptual tool for analyzing Mennonite religious/ethnic identity is useful because it is dynamic and multidimensional. Barth's (1969) theory recognizes the linkage of processes among the micro, group, and mass levels. Yet little research using Barth's (1969) theories has demonstrated ways ethnic boundaries are changed or maintained at the individual level of analysis.

Whether Mennonites are in the "twilight of ethnicity" (Alba, 1988) like other Americans of European ancestry or whether they are a viable entity has been the major concern of past research devoted to Mennonite life. Almost all of the sociological research about Mennonites as an ethnic group has sought to interpret lifestyle change. The basic research question was "Are Mennonites losing their identity?" The answer has been "yes" and "no" and, at times, both. The question which this research addresses is not, "Are Mennonites losing their identity?" But, "How are Mennonites constructing their identity?" a topic not addressed by any previous research nor lodged within the theoretical orientations of ethnic group relationships.

### *Group Maintenance and Mediated Communication*

Efforts to support and shape group boundaries rely on communication and to some degree on mediated communication. Mass media are among the most comprehensive representations of the changes in Mennonite life and mediated communication the central vehicle for communication within and outside the group. Therefore, a line of inquiry was established to study the connection of group identity to mediated communication, a concern not addressed by any previous research. Further, it should be noted that almost all previous research has neglected examining any part media play in interaction that shapes ethnic groups.

It is unusual that qualitative studies of groups and their relationship to mediated communication have been so neglected, since some of the earliest research in mass media was concerned with the social psychological ramifications associated with mass communication. Both Blumer (1933) and Herzog (1941) used qualitative methods to seek subjects' accounts of media influence, and another early study The Invasion from Mars by Hadley Cantril (1940) was developed from in-depth interviews. But beginning during World War II and continuing into the last quarter of the twentieth century, qualitative studies and the conceptualization of the audience as a primary area of analysis were ignored by the majority of mass communication research agendas (Czitrom, 1982). In recent years, however, several major developments have occurred in the study of mass communication. Among them, the reintroduction of the "sociologies of everyday life" to media studies has awakened interest in mass communication and broadened the definition of what constitutes the audience for mass media (Schramm, 1983; Tuchman, 1988; McQuail, 1985). Recent research projects coming from the "active audience" perspective have been qualitative and several have focused on the audience as a participant in mass communication (Libes, 1988; Lindlof, 1987; Lull, 1980). Nevertheless, no mass media research using qualitative methods to examine audiences of religious/ethnic groups could be located. In fact, as yet, relatively little qualitative research work in mass communication has been undertaken. Of the studies published, Morley's (1986) research, Family Television , brought to the fore the idea that television is a phenomenon serving a whole range of social purposes. Studies like Morley's are rare, and when undertaken, often they are tied to a mass communication interpretation rather than to broader social-psychological perspectives of the kind that inform this research.

The interactive orientation and attention to media in the work of communication theorist Robert Park has been used as a focal point for the present research. Park (1967) noted early in the twentieth century that the influence of media in shaping ethnic groups was process oriented. He found the foreign language press, which encouraged literacy and focused on American politics and social issues, did as much or more to acculturate newly arrived immigrants as it did to perpetuate old world language and customs. Park (1967) realized the study of media as an independent variable was ill advised. He sought to understan the foreign language press. The Mennonite religious/ethnics studied in this research are unlike the ethnics Park studied in the 1920s. They have at their disposal a myriad of media technologies. The function of media and the way media work to sustain groups operates in a much more complex fashion today. Nevertheless, the essence of Park's ideas of process as the central integrating idea of group life and his (Park, 1967) ideas on the part media play in social heritage (Martindale, 1981) remain valid and serve the basic underlying premise of this research. From Barth (1969) a set of explanations for defining ethnicity as the construction of social boundaries is developed. From Park (1969) the idea of media as interactive and a multidirectional influence is applied. Together the two theories offer considerable power in undergirding an explanation of the ways Mennonites manage their values and identity through communicative processes.

## *Method*

Although overall an interactive orientation shaped my research perspecitve, I entered into the project with no a priori theories of how culture and communication worked in Mennonite life. When I undertook the study, I did not intend to embrace the social world of Mennonites through my research, nor did I want to become an "ethnic" specialist or create an ethnography. I instead focused analysis on one aspect of Mennonite life, mediated communication. I selected Mennonites as subjects because they formed a distinct and identifiable group and because I had lived in Northwest Oklahoma, near these people, for over fifteen years. But more important than convenience, the Mennonites were an ideal group for the study because of their peculiar relationship to mass communication. Their strict rules of conduct, that at one time forbade the use of mass media by church members, have been relaxed gradually over the years. Mass communication now is part of the everyday life of these Mennonites. Like the subjects Goffman (1961,1963) often chose for his research, Mennonites were selected for this study particularly because they are an atypical group. Their characteristics and history are not representative of the overall population, and, as such, they are distinctive and identifiable and thus facilitate the study of media use.

My research was based principally on in-depth personal interviews held with persons of Mennonite heritage. To verify and augment the data gathered in the interviews, I entered into participant observation of the group. In addition, I researched primary and secondary sources to check the reliability and validity of the data I had gathered and to provide background for a summary of Mennonite culture, social organization, and development.

I interviewed more than forty subjects selected purposively. Participation was voluntary and subjects were assured anonymity. My long-time residence in the area preceded my role as participant member, so I decided to present myself straightforwardly as a researcher. My established marginality may have limited somewhat my ability to "get inside" the group. Nevertheless, when word of my project circulated, the number of willing participants snowballed.

To ensure the reliability and validity of the data, the subjects were selected to represent a wide range of individuals of Mennonite heritage. Some were active members of Mennonite congregations. Some were currently members of other Protestant denominations. Some lived in urban areas. Some lived on farms or in small towns. For purposes of verification by comparison, I interviewed several members in each of two Mennonite congregations of different denominations located in the same city. The majority of the interview participants were above average in socioeconomic status and education. This is reflective of the majority of Mennonites in the area. All interviewed were adults.

I wanted to talk with those who had experienced change in the Mennonite way of life. Therefore, I concentrated on people who were from fifty-five to seventy-five years of age, but I interviewed many older and some younger, about half of them men and half women. There was no set interview schedule, although I did ask questions during the interview sessions that generally lasted between two and three hours. I avoided making media the focal point of the interview. I didn't want to "lead" the interviewees and avoided direct questions about the importance of media, even so many initiated the subject of media use. Most interviewed directly offered opinions on media, especially television, when asked to talk about change.

I began to conduct interviews and entered into participant observation of the group at about the same time. I attended church services, study groups, and, on occasion, the informal gatherings of two separate Mennonite denominations. In addition, I used unobtrusive primary and secondary sources of information as further support for my research. Among these sources were materials provided me by congregations from their local publications and from their denominational publications. I also used unpublished manuscripts provided by individuals I interviewed and published works from the personal libraries of the participants. I used newspaper articles and census data. Whenever possible I checked the accounts given me against published fact. On the whole, I found the Mennonites' descriptions of their group's past to be accurate.

During and after the information gathering process, I employed the technique of "constant comparison" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to organize and analyze the data. The primary and secondary sources were used extensively in providing the record of the group's development in Northwest Oklahoma. Conclusions about media use and the maintenance of Mennonite group identity are drawn directly from observations and statements of Mennonites themselves.

### *Mennonites in Northwest Oklahoma*

The saga of Mennonites in Northwest Oklahoma begins in migration. On the move, migrating again and again, Mennonites, from the inception of their faith in the sixteenth century, sought to preserve their belief by relocating their religious communities (Board of Christian Literature, 1984; Urry, 1983). Fleeing the persecution of dominant cultural groups, many sixteenth century Mennonites fled Western Europe to relocate in Eastern Germany, Prussia, and Poland, where the political environment was, at that time, more tolerant. The Mennonites maintained their identity by their religious values that emphasized nonresistance and adult baptism and by their exclusive in-group social activity. While they used German in religious services, they commonly spoke a local, "low German" dialect in day-to-day interaction with each other. They lived by self-sufficient farming (Smith, 1927).

By the mid-eighteenth century, Mennonites who had settled in Eastern Europe again began to experience difficulties. In response to political pressure in Prussia and in other Eastern European countries as well, a new wave of migration began, this time to Russia (Bender & Smith, 1964; Rose, 1988). Huge tracts of unoccupied land were opened to settlement and colonists were encouraged by Catherine the Great (1762-1796) to resettle in the new Russian territories. The first group of Mennonites emigres left Danzig in the fall of 1788 (Wendell, 1949). Altogether about six thousand European Mennonites made the move. In Russia, through hard work, frugality, and, among other things, the willingness to accept innovative advances in farm practices and technology, they enjoyed phenomenal success; but the Mennonites remained culturally insular. They kept to themselves socially and followed the traditions of the past which included the use of German language. As a whole, Mennonites prospered in Russia. An extensive educational system was developed and Mennonite supported hospitals and asylums were founded (Bender & Smith, 1964).

Then there was crisis. The security of Mennonite emigrants began to erode during the later part of the nineteenth century. After 1880 Russian was required as the official language in Mennonite schools, economic pressures mounted, conscription of Mennonites was begun, and relocation, once again, became an option of choice for many Mennonites (Reimer & Gaeddert, 1956; Fancis, 1955; Urry, 1983). As their life in Russia became more intolerable, the Mennonites considered alternatives to their situation (Dyke, 1967). The land available for homesteading in the Western United States was free and, in terms of soil composition and climate, similar to their homeland in Russia (Jenkins, 1986). The American government welcomed skilled farmer-immigrants to settle the vast, fertile prairies and guaranteed freedom of religion (Rippley, 1976).

Beginning in 1893 when the Cherokee Outlet was opened for settlement, German-speaking, Russian Mennonite immigrants and others, who came from older Mennonite settlements in Pennsylvania and the eastern states, together with Mennonites, who were dispersing from more recent groups of migrants to the Western plains states, established homesteads and churches in Northwestern Oklahoma (Hiebert, 1974; Roark, 1979). They found the Cherokee Outlet sun-baked, flat, and virtually treeless. Despite their expertise in farming, frugality, and diligence, the Mennonites endured great hardships in Oklahoma (Suderman, 1987). With homestead opportunity came meager living conditions including: inclement weather, plagues of grasshoppers, epidemics of diphtheria and scarlet fever, and prairie fires (Hale, 1980).

The Mennonites carried with them to the newly opened Oklahoma frontier a religious belief system, agricultural skills, folkways, and Turkey Red, a hard red winter wheat (Hein, 1974). This seed wheat, brought from Russia, laid the foundation for large scale grain production throughout the great plains. The introduction of hardy, heavy-yielding, winter wheat was the spark that ignited the rural development of the flat, arid prairies of all of middle America.

The Mennonites built a community of faith on the Oklahoma plains. The German language was the most obvious symbol of their separation from society. Through the early years of statehood, it served as a major boundary that let Mennonites uphold their ethnicity while at the same time they were increasing their interaction with the larger society. Scattered on isolated farms, separated from the solid ethnic communities that characterized group life in Russia, and forced to rely primarily on public education for the instruction of their youth, the church structure itself came to be the principle force binding the group.

Nonconformity and closed social activity served as the vehicle for group solidarity. While a few congregations were able to finance "German schools" for primary and seconday education, a good many churches set up German Sunday Schools to train both youth and adults in the Mennonite way. Reading "worldly" literature was strictly denied (Haury, 1981). Newspapers and some classical literature, however, were acceptable. The Bible was considered essential, and reading what Mennonite publications were available was encouraged. For several years Zionsbote, a German-language newspaper published by a farmer and minister in Medford, Oklahoma (Kroeker, 1954), circulated among Mennonites; but both paper and printing press were moved to Kansas in 1906.

The community at large admired the Mennonites for their hard work, thrift, forthright business dealings, and sound farming practices. Yet the events surrounding America's entry into World War I and public reaction toward Mennonites during the war, challenged the very existence of the group (Haury, 1981; Coon, 1988; Juhnke, 1975; Sowell, 1981). Old world traditions, German language use, and the practice of nonresistant pacifism were radically altered in response to the pressures of threat, intimidation, and in certain cases, violence brought on by the war (Rohrs, 1980; McKee, Coon, & Kroeker, 1988). The war time persecutions which decimated the German/Russian Mennonite ethnicity also united the religious Mennonite ethnicity. The Mennonite religion was rejuvenated (Hostetler, 1986; Epp, 1977).

As Northwest Oklahoma suffered through not one but two decades of depression after the first world war, migration from rural areas began. The number of Mennonites leaving the farm and entering occupations in urban areas grew. The group began to borrow from the established society to keep their own society going. A more highly organized church structure developed. A good many practices of mainstream Protestant denominations were adopted by Mennonite churches, including the use of some printed material from Protestant publishing houses. Nonconformity as a basic religious symbol still was cultivated by the group. To preserve their identity Mennonites held to norms of moral behavior that were more strict than those of the community at large; they continued to promote in-group marriage and socialized almost entirely with those of their own faith (Haury, 1981). Secondary education for youth in private religious settings reinforced Mennonite traditions.

Mennonite men and women did make some adaptation the the changing era. They were among the first to make use of power driven machinery and other labor saving farm devices made possible for Americans in the 1920s and 1930s. Listening to the new radio sets or attending "picture shows," however, was a different matter. Radio did become more acceptable as the years passed by partly because it was a source of news and information, particularly weather reports which were of vital interest to Mennonite farmers.

When World War II approached, church leadership worked against prevailing public opinion and overt discrimination to generate a selective service provision for conscientious objectors (Smith, 1950). Nevertheless, many Mennonite men entered the military service during the second world war (The Daily Oklahoman, 1942). With the passing of time, militarism came to be tolerated, if not accepted, by the majority of the group. Today the peace mission of most churches in Northwest Oklahoma is focused on humanitarian aid. Nonresistance is a belief nurtured by the church but also an activity open to personal choice.

During the years after World War II, Mennonite life changed dramatically (Epp, 1977). Mechanization, increased production, and specialized, one-crop farming worked to dislodge the diversified, family-farm operations that had historically been the major occupation and the foundation of the closed organization that bound Mennonites together as a religious/ethnic group. Largely through urbanization, professionalization of work, and affluence, the Mennonites gradually were assimilated into mainstream society. Political and economic issues and social concerns have become a part of the Mennonites' daily world. The group no longer attempts to shun society; instead, Mennonites actively participate in the larger social world embracing many forms of mediated communication. Old taboos against attending movies or using electronic media have been dropped.

At the same time the Mennonites have embraced the outside world, there has been an unprecedented amount of institution building, evangelism, and program activity of all kinds in Mennonite churches (Hostetler, 1987; Wiesel, 1977). Local Mennonite churches generate newsletters and other media and at the denominational level, publishing houses print books, magazines, and other materials. During the post-World War II years there was reorganization of the Mennonite ethic. The influence of mainstream Protestantism has continued to contribute to church life, as has the influence of Fundamentalism (Haury, 1981). Both are apparent in the various sources of literature and visual media consumed by the group.

Some old world traditions live on. Some unique forms of church life have evolved. A variety of public events and celebrations such as the auctions (Cox, 1988), the meat canning project, and disaster relief projects cut across denominational ties of Mennonites. These activities contribute substantially to a new sense of vitality and direction for the group. Mennonites today live within the social world. What sets them apart is not their behavior in the world, but their way of looking at the world.

The history, events, and circumstances the group have encountered have transcended what is almost a century of life in Oklahoma. During their years in Northwest Oklahoma, Mennonites, at times, have chosen change or at other times have been forced by the larger society to make changes in their group life. Yet the Mennonite religion and ethnic group continue as a strong influence on members and a viable part of the community at large. Numerous, well-attended churches located in towns and small cities across Northwestern Oklahoma minister to the needs of local congregations and actively extend fellowship to the public at large. Mennonites have moved from poverty to prosperity, from nonconformity to integration, from closed congregations to evangelical mission, from nonresistant pacifism to pro-active peace initiatives and, for some, even military service. The group has been transformed from the outside and, perhaps more importantly, has transformed itself from the inside. The Mennonite society today is vigorous.

### *Mennonites as Consumers of Media*

The group of Mennonites studied in this research are immersed in a media oriented, technologically-centered society. These Mennonites are part of an information based world. They live in a global village. Their homes are "media centers."

It would be uncommon to find a Mennonite household without radio, television, stereo, magazines, books, and newspapers. Videocassette recorders, compact disk players, computers, and the like are found in fewer but still a sizable number of Mennonite homes. Without exception, all those interviewed for this research said they used media in a variety of forms daily. Many start their day being awakened by a clock radio. Many said they read a newspaper daily, and a clear majority indicated that at some time during the day they read the Bible or used some other form of published religious devotional material. Few of the Mennonites interviewed considered themselves to be heavy television users. On the other hand, few said they restricted the use of media in any way in their homes, although many at some time had restricted their children's television use.

Most commented on the poor quality of television programing and pointed to violence and sex as disagreeable, but few could recall a specific instance when they had "turned off" a program because it was offensive. Most regarded a lot of what is in the media as valueless, and a few thought television was actually harmful in some instances, but those who did said they didn't know exactly "how" media harmed people.

One woman indicated that the media, their quality and their forms, were simply part of the "environment." This rationale for indiscriminate media use seems to fit within the Mennonites' broader frame of reference that has accepted lifestyles that conform to those of mainstream society. Mennonites believe they must now live within the world. The acculturative influence of all this media use was illustrated by one man:

> We had our three granddaughters with us last week. Well, I have a VCR. "Grandpa! we want to watch the movie." The first movie we saw--cute, interesting movie, trick photography in that thing like you wouldn't believe. The language was not that bad. Next movie we got, in terms of lifestyles, was very, very far fetched from any Christian values. I had three grand kids that in less than twenty-four hours saw that movie three times. And, of course, to them the fun thing was the baby. Well, they just howled. They didn't realize that

> baby was born out of wedlock. I mean that kind of issue was not in the kids' heads, but you know, for me, that's not where I'm at.

The overriding perception is that the media, in their various forms, are acculturating. Much in the media is distasteful to Mennonites and many think, probably harmful. But to attempt to disassociate one's self or one's family from media would be futile. On the other hand, the media also are perceived as an enjoyable pastime that offer some kinds of information.

Instead of attempting to restrict the acculturating influences in media that may or may not be affecting them, Mennonites actively select and use certain types of media that reinforce their own value system, the daily devotional, for example. Daily Bible reading is still a widespread practice among Mennonites. It often is augmented by other Christian readings that are historical or instructive in nature. Printed material published by the Mennonite denominations, The Christian Leader and The Mennonite and other periodicals, are circulated widely. In addition, many books, pamphlets, and take-home Sunday School workbooks for children and adults put out by the Mennonite denominations also are found in Mennonite homes. Religious books and music printed by Protestant publishing houses or by Fundamentalist groups are widely used, as well as videotaped religious subject matter.

Periodicals and other kinds of printed and video material that relate to the special interests of individuals are used by Mennonites. For example, literature from peace organizations and from anti-abortion groups is circulated to members of the group. Special interest information geared to hobbies, sports, and/or business and professional people also can be found in Mennonite homes.Not only are the materials produced by other religious groups found in the homes of Mennonites, they are used in church services as well. The Mennonite denominations also prepare and distribute video material to local congregations. Movies on church history and mission efforts of the Mennonite denominations are distributed widely and shown regularly to individual congregations.

In summary, Mennonites, as a group, do not appear to restrict the flow of mass media into their homes in any regulated way. Although they often criticize it, they seem to involve themselves with many forms of media content and types of media technology. Individual members of the group actively seek out media that reinforce the denominational beliefs and values of the group, the religious values of constituent religious groups, and/or material that appeals to other special interests that they might have. Outside their homes, in their churches, Mennonites avail themselves of materials, especially visual media, produced by Fundamentalist or mainline Protestant organizations, and their own denominations make available movies and other kinds of printed and visual materials for use in local churches. Mennonites appear to involve themselves with masses of mass communication and special interest material.

### *Mennonites as Producers of Media*

Mennonites create as well as consume media. As farmers in earlier years, they were among the first to adopt new agricultural technologies. Now, they, just as readily, adopt new media technologies. Mennonites use the technologies, print and visual media, particularly visual media, to produce an experience of community. They appear to connect themselves, to reshape their cultural heritage and tie their daily existence to their history, largely through media images. This activity goes beyond the formulation of content or the construction of materials. It involves, among other things, the selection of media form and subject, editing, and dissemination of the final product. For example, video cameras provide the group opportunity to make movies. One congregation put together a script about their church, taped several different activities of their members, edited their work, and produced it all as a video recording that was broadcast on public access cable television. Another congregation regularly video tapes its Sunday morning church services for replay at a local nursing home in which several elderly members of the congregation are confined. Almost all Mennonite churches produce a weekly newsletter that contains information about congregational programs and events and is mailed to member's homes.

One minister of a congregation in an urban area uses a darkroom he has set up at the church to produce a series of slides that he uses to accompany his weekly sermons. He said:

> I had never been into photography before and I took a class on it. I desperately wanted to communicate. I love the Bible, and am thoroughly convinced that it's God's word to us, as old as it is. The principles are still the truth. I desperately wanted to communicate it. And I just realized the traditional sermon of a half hour monologue wasn't doing it. I felt that having some kind of visual effect would help. That's basically my motivation and I really ought to think about other ways, you know.

Ministers or church lay leaders usually are involved in the media creation processes, often organizing the work of others. Although only a small portion of the membership is usually involved directly in producing mediated communication, the entire congregation generally participates in using what the few have produced. Further, the congregations seem to identify with the work of the "media specialists" among their group and share in the ownership of the finished product. There is a certain amount of congregational pride associated with the projects, particularly the more creative applications of visual media.

The production of media is a multi-faceted operation and is unique. Every congregation is involved on its own. It should be noted, however, that except for the weekly newsletters, the extensive production of media at the local level is very limited and not undertaken by the majority of congregations.

In addition to the media created by individuals and local churches, mediated communication also is created at the group level. The annual Mennonite relief sale is an auction of handmade quilts, hand crafted clocks and toys, new and used farm equipment, and other items; and it is an example of how media is used within the larger primary group. The relief sale project is an opportunity to raise money for Mennonite peace programs and an additional opportunity for the group to reify its ethnic heritage. It is highly publicized. Through brochures and and announcements and news releases sent to local, area, and statewide publications, an organized effort of volunteers use public channels of communication to attract attention for the sale.

At a higher level of organization, the General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches and the Mennonite Church General Conference each maintain a publishing house to circulate material for church and home consumption. The denominational headquarters of the Mennonite organizations also produce and distribute films, videotape, and slides that emphasize church history and doctrine. One Mennonite woman living in Northwest Oklahoma has published a book of religious stories for children through her denomination's press. She is an exception. The amount of media produced by individual Mennonites for their local congregations or denominations is not large, especially when compared to the amount of commercial media consumed by Mennonites.

The Mennonite production of media is obviously an expressive act and built within ongoing and shifting boundaries of the subculture. It is a form of social interaction through written word and visual image. In the more distant past, the seventeenth century invention of the printing press augmented the spread of Anabaptism and greatly encouraged communication by cutting across class lines and democratizing culture. The speed of printing with movable type spread ideas and information, to an ever increasing audience (Czitrom, 1982), but access to the press remained limited. Capital, opportunity, and skill in written expression greatly restricted those seeking a voice in the marketplace of communication.

Today's world is different. As in the past, the media of today provide

Mennonites opportunity for communication, extension of the group, and bonding, although in a much more expansive way. Successful Mennonite publishing houses long have existed at the denominational level and, from time to time, a few of the general membership of local congregations have had their work accepted for publication. Although these opportunities continue, at present impressive changes in methods of communication overall have occurred. The rapid introduction of low-cost media production apparatus in the form of video camera-recorders and video cassette recorders, desktop publishing, computer networking, and the like, has revolutionized interactive communication among Mennonites. Not relegated to the position of passive receiver, Mennonites now have within their means the tools of production. These new tools of creativity allow individuals and small groups to play a initiative role in mediated communication. With financial barriers to the technology eroding, Mennonites can engage imagery through many different mediums, visual as well as print, and, if not compete with commercial media, at least transcend its all out pervasiveness. The current ease and affordability of communication technology has empowered individuals and local congregations with new tools of expression.

The main purpose of the media Mennonites produce is to extend the group's identity. The creation of media is an expression of the group and about the group that reinforces the group. In the following instances, taking a video of church services to the rest home strengthens group ties. Producing a television film about church life heightens the group's identification with the general public. Writing children's books and photographing slides to accompany sermons have instructive value. The group puts out literature and imagery, and, while they may not have access to "the media," they do access the media technologies and that in itself is a means to a transcendental end. The hoped for effect is both temporal and a heavenly reward.

## *Media and Boundary Maintenance*

The history of Mennonite life in Oklahoma reveals a tremendous amount of acculturation that has taken place over the years. From the early days of frontier settlement onward the Mennonites, in practically all facets of their social life, have adapted to the demands of the larger social world. These Mennonites, for the most part, have assimilated into the mainstream of society. The taboos that forbade use of the radio, attendance at movies, and reading some printed materials have been replaced with relaxed group control that accommodates the use of many forms of mediated communication. The group's early and continued emphasis on education, which resulted in individuals' exposure to alternative perspectives, and the group's early adoption and innovative uses of technology perhaps have influenced their acceptance of media.

Possibly more influential were economic pressures from both within and outside the group and the anti-German feelings of Americans, in general, during the first and second world wars. Between 1885 and World War I, there were at least sixteen religious and secular German-language newspapers published in Oklahoma. Confronted by threats and/or loss of circulation and advertising, only two of these papers remained in existence after World War I. The last, Die Enid Post, ceased publication in 1935 (Rohrs, 1981).

The reality of the world wars demanded change and served as a turning point in the Mennonite way of life. Mennonites drastically revised their conception of themselves as a religious body and the relationship of their culture to American society. Most churches replaced German with English in church services just before or during World War I. The few remaining German schools were closed about that time as well. But it was not until the 1950s that Mennonite churches ceased using the German language in worship services altogether.

As old-world tradition and customs became a source of liability, major changes affected the church members. Instead of withdrawing from the social world, the Mennonites came to consider themselves inside American society and outside worldly society. As the Mennonites reworked their relationship to citizenship, dramatic changes occurred in their acceptance of mainstream mores and media use. Significant boundaries between the church and the larger community became invisible. No longer identified by dress and social custom, both consumption and production of media took on more importance as processes for maintaining the religious/ethnicity of the group.

In a manner which may be described as compatible, rather than parallel to the society at large, communicative acts, in this instance mediated communicative acts, have become instruments of community organization and symbolic representations. Media use allows the group members to build boundaries that establish and maintain the group's identity so that the group adapt to certain but not all social tenets of the majority. Assimilation and acculturation are sometimes for appearance sake only.

### *Media as Shared Experience: Symbols and Group Organization*

There are symbolic and organizational aspects to the group's use of mediated communication. The daily devotional and shared Bible reading serve as examples of symbolic expression of media use. These religious activities are often ritualistic. Devotions generally are held either at breakfast, at the evening dinner hour, or before retiring at night. The devotions also are most usually observed in a ritualistic manner with Bible reading, the study of a "lesson" from printed material, and prayer, each addressed in a prescribed manner and particular order.

Group television watching, videotape, and movie viewing have ritualistic and symbolic significance as well. The gathering of the group in the church to share in media use is a late twentieth century representation of the group's bonding in the mid-sixteenth century. The viewing of films on church history--the recreation of the deaths of the early martyrs--are means to instill in viewers the lessons of group identification as well as church doctrine. The review of the migrations of the group in search of religious freedom reinforces an historical association with Mennonite ethnicity that serves as a badge of identification that is a positive, albeit self-imposed and entirely conceptual, label of marginality.

Not all group viewing is restricted to lessons in ethnic history and church doctrine. A good deal of videotape watching is devoted to topics related to everyday life. The subjects of media content range from lessons on how to build a good marriage to effective estate planning. The willingness to make use of videotapes produced by a variety of Protestant religious denominations or Fundamentalists or non-denominational groups is reflective of Barth's (1969) view that groups persevere even though group boundaries are permeable and may be crossed often and in many ways. The example also is illustrative of Barth's(1969) theory that ethnicity is a continuous expression of social interaction. Most of the church communication is repetition of simple messages whether produced by the local congregation, the larger church group, or appropriated from ideologically constituent organizations. Much of the religious material consumed by the group is produced by Mennonites and much of the religious material consumed by the group is produced by other Protestant individuals and organizations.

Both the media created by Mennonites and the media coming from Protestant denominations have the effect of "canalizing" (Barth, 1969) group activity. The historical accounts of ostracism and suffering at the hands of the dominant society channel the group and encourage a positive association with the group's social distinctiveness. The visual and graphic reiteration of the Mennonite doctrine provides members an opportunity to identify Mennoniteism with separatism. The media creations of Protestant denominationalism and other alied groups generate support for a Christian ethic that does not conflict with Mennonite doctrine and is directly applicable to Mennonites everyday life. Media present symbols of Mennoniteism and media use can be a symbol of group integration as well as a ritual of group life.

The consumption of media is indeed an act of boundary maintenance which embodies ritualistic and symbolic expressions and at the same time reflects how people and ideas may flow across boundaries with the boundaries remaining intact. The acts of media consumption and production also are a part of the process of active community organization. For a Mennonite, making a life that is "in the world, but not of the world" is a tightrope walked by the assistance of shared group experience. The act of creating sermons that integrate self prepared, photographic slides, the work of videotaping Sunday services for replay in convalescent homes, the communal effort involved in the preparation of church newsletters--all play a role in building and reinforcing the purposes of the group. Not only are they major endeavors in the life of the churches, they offer an opportunity for members to act out the communal values expressed in their religious doctrine. The activity of preparing the newsletter, which often involves the participation of several members, as well as the activity involved in the work of sermon preparation and videotaping, each is an interaction with a direct influence in building support within the group.

From the viewpoint of this research, perhaps the most striking example of media use as an integrative function of the group was the production of the videotape that recorded the activities and purposes of one local congregation. The videotape represented the organization of the group; it involved a goodly number of the congregation in its preparation; and it provided opportunity for the outside community to identify and identify with Mennonites. The activity provided a network of social ties that linked the congregation to their common identity, intensified positive group interaction, and was an important resource for perpetuating the formal structure of the group. Media production helped to undergird the normative organization of the congregation. For this group of Mennonites working with media, creating it and using it, is not only an individual experience. It is, at times, a shared experience.

### *Media as a Commodity: Multidirectional Influences*

In the activity of religious/ethnic group boundary maintenance media use is multidimensional. The popular view of media as a force that encourages homogeneity is not an entirely accurate conceptualization. The influence of media in the acculturation of minorities and ethnic groups certainly cannot be denied. Nevertheless, the uses of mass communication are hardly unidirectional. Park (1967), himself, made a point of stressing the multidirectional influences of media. Mediated communication use, as this study shows, not only serves to acculturate minorities, it also may be a way to reify in-group bonds. In a group whose members accommodate the frames of reference present in the dominant society, group boundaries are invisible and form around means of communication. Media use, even in its most general form, can unify the subgroup as well as unify the society in general. An urban Mennonite alluded to the concept this way:

> Well, you know, there are some that might be

> shocked that I go to a movie now and then. There are those that don't have TV. Not that I know of though. Now I know a few families who will watch just Christian TV exclusively, and I think I would rather have them watch something secular than some of the things they watch that come from that viewpoint. I think by and large our folks interact with the culture. They know right from wrong, they know the Christian world view, and that's not bothered by other things. I think we can enjoy the plot and the characterization and the artistic value of something that has a diametrically opposed world view.

The process of selecting media for use, the consumption of their content in various forms, the integration of different types of media, and the budgeting of time spent with media are interactive acts. Media present opportunity for acculturation, but they also present opportunity to "canalize" (Barth, 1969) group behavior through adjustment in the way media are used. While much of their media use is nonselective, these people do actively select some types of consumption and produce their own media. By picking and choosing from content and technologies individual Mennonites put together the boundaries of their group and create their religious/ethnicity.

Marshall McLuhan (1964) made note of a similar situation when he called attention to the success of IBM. The company, McLuhan (1964) pointed out, did not realize its potential until it recognized that its business was not producing business machines but the business of information processing. Mennonites, too, seem to have realized the malleability of technological communication. The Mennonites who were the subjects of this research were able to accommodate media in all their forms. They use media as a commodity. Media are accepted as a necessary fact of modern life, yet mass media are not received without question nor their technology accepted passively. Instead media, as well as its content, are processed as objects of communication. Mennonites accept the media of the dominant culture and they adjust their uses of media. In this way mass media become a commodity of exchange. Challenged by the power of the written word and the subtle persuasion of visual language, their activity in using media and producing their own is a countervailing one-up-manship that holds at bay the cultural imperialism of the dominant society.

McLuhan (1964) observed the impact of media technology and stressed its effect, not so much as a unifying agent as one that brings closer contact. McLuhan's analysis emphasized the power of the electronic technologies of the twentieth century to connect the farthest corners of the world and tie disparate populations together in a global village. An analysis of the Mennonites studied in this research affirms McLuhan's (1964) premise.

If indeed McLuhan's (1964) concept of a global village built by technology is true, it is also possible that life in the village built by technology is carried on in clans, clans that are connected through electronically mediated communication. For the Mennonites, at least those observed in this study, mediated communication is an important means through which individuals in the group express self-identification to the group, sustain beliefs and values, shore up frames of reference, and maintain group boundaries. At the same time mediated communication acculturates it cultivates religious/ethnicity.

## *Conclusion*

Mennonites have undergone a tremendous change in the almost one hundred years the group have spent in Oklahoma, from a closed community to an open one, from plain dress and restrictive codes of behavior to assimilation and acculturation into mainstream society, from nonresistance as religious doctrine to pacifism as personal choice. The events and issues surrounding World War I precipitated a change in the group's use of German language, in the group's response to war, in group culture overall. Mennonites live in a complex and rapidly changing society. Adaptation has permitted survival. As codes of dress and conduct for the group were broken, the ascriptive nature of Mennoniteism gave way to a religious/ethnicity based largely on self-identity.

Mennonite religious/ethnicity is an invisible ethnicity. It is ideational and shaped by beliefs and values that take form in communicative acts. Mennonites involve themselves with virtually all forms of mediated communication. They use a variety of religious and secular printed materials, as well as radio, television, and various types of recording equipment. Mennonites produce media in many forms including church newsletters, advertisements for their activities, videotapes, and illustrated sermons. In recent years, the ease and affordability of the new communication technologies has empowered individuals and local congregations and allowed Mennonites to play a initiative role in mediated communication. As the Mennonites of Northwest Oklahoma consume and produce media, they form symbols, develop rituals around media use, and shape their social organization through media use. By selecting media and producing their own media, Mennonites process communication as a commodity essential to their group life.

Mennonites interact with communication to shape group boundaries that allow for the group's continued existence within the context of the larger society. The dominant trend toward assimilation, acculturation, and acceptance of the larger social world is undergirded by a strong effort to reify the group's religious/ethnicity. The media that acculturate also delineate. The aspect of acculturation is most evident when appraising the uses of mass communication, and the media's unifying potential is most evident when appraising the uses of mediated communication at the congregational level.

For these people, mediated communication is both an individual and shared experience. The ability to manipulate mediated communication as a commodity essential to the Mennonite way of life and the Mennonites' ability to access the means of producing media, each play an important part in defining group boundaries. Mennonite identity has been preserved even amidst great social changes within the group. Today, in an era of instant communication that has turned the world into a global village, the Mennonites of Northwest Oklahoma live within an electronically connected clan.

## *Footnotes*

(1) According the United States Bureau of the Census, Mennonites in 1985 numbered approximately one hundred thousand nationwide. Because of their small numbers, no accurate count of their number in Oklahoma at present could be determined. The number of Mennonites in Northwest Oklahoma may range anywhere from 1,000 to 6,000.

(2) Although the focus of this research is on the Mennonites who have acculturated and assimilated into American society, those interested in modern Mennonites who remain separated from society may find a discussion of these groups in Eaton (1952), Barclay (1967) Redekop and Hostetler (1977), Defrange (1988), and Hostetler (1980).

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# DAILY NEWSPAPER COVERAGE OF THE GAY AND LESBIAN COMMUNITY:

## Perceptual Differences of Senior Editors and Their Gay and Lesbian Staffers

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# DAILY NEWSPAPER COVERAGE OF THE GAY AND LESBIAN COMMUNITIES:

## Perceptual Differences of Senior Editors and Their Gay and Lesbian Staffers[1]

### Introduction

The Human Resources Committee of the American Society of Newspaper Editors in April, 1990, published its pioneer study of perceptions gay and lesbian journalists hold of their newspapers as work environments and of their newspapers' coverage of the gay and lesbian community.[2] ASNE undertook this study knowing that the gay and lesbian minority in the United States is unlike any other. Many in its ranks choose to remain unknown, and they are not immediately identifiable. Because of this anonymity their numbers are frequently underestimated, with the result that issues of concern to this economically and politically important community remain unreported or under-reported in newspaper columns.[3] The failure of newspapers and other media to cover the AIDS epidemic until heterosexuals, children, and celebrities began dying from AIDS-related diseases is a well-documented example of newspaper aversion to covering what was seen, in this case mistakenly, as an issue of concern only to the gay community. The consequence of this early omission, in terms of readers' knowledge about AIDS and its prevention, has been devastating to public health in the United States and around the world.[4]

As ASNE members noted, it is increasingly important for today's newspaper editors to alter this pattern of omission, to cover activities and concerns of gays and lesbians and to cover them fairly and accurately. The gay and lesbian community has become a major force and focus of controversy in our society. Leroy F. Aarons explains: "Domestic partners legislation, gay adoption, anti-discrimination laws, fundamentalist attacks on the gay lifestyle, morality and public responsibility and, of course, the still-raging AIDS epidemic have brought once-easily ignored issues into demanding focus . . . And [coverage of these issues] makes good business sense. Gays and lesbians are readers and consumers, many of them in comfortable economic brackets with expandable incomes."[5] The ASNE study began the process of evaluating how good or poor a job newspapers are doing with regard to this community by seeking input from those gays and lesbians most closely associated with newspapers--their own reporters and editors who are themselves members of the gay and lesbian community.

Seeking input from gay and lesbian journalists offered ASNE a convenient bridge between newspapers, with their professional values and work customs, and the gay and lesbian community, with its unfamiliar concerns and interests. Opinions expressed by these staffers are particularly valuable; they appreciate the values and processes of newspapers and understand the gay and lesbian community in which they live. The 205 gay and lesbian reporters and editors who voluntarily participated in the ASNE study may or may not be representative of all the gay and lesbian journalists employed by the country's daily newspapers. The participants in the study tended to come from larger metropolitan papers. In addition, the gay and lesbian journalists volunteered to participate in the study, making the ASNE respondents a self-selected sample.[6] Yet, as a pilot study, the ASNE survey did provide important insights, some flattering to newspapers and many stingingly critical.

Even with the limitations posed by this over-representation of urban dailies and by self-selection, the ASNE study offered substantial evidence that gay and lesbian journalists have mixed feelings and are uneasy about their roles in their newsrooms. Of those surveyed, 60 percent considered their chances for advancement as good or excellent, and 75 percent saw being gay as no hindrance to their advancement. But 81 percent of the gay and lesbian journalists responding to the ASNE survey reported hearing derogatory comments about gays and lesbians in the newsroom and only 28 percent believed their newspapers are committed to preventing discrimination against gays and lesbians.[7]

Even more significant, the ASNE study found that the respondents were highly critical of how their newspapers cover the gay and lesbian community and issues of concern to it. More than a quarter of the respondents characterized their papers' coverage of issues of concern to gays and lesbians as poor, and nearly half said it was only fair. Furthermore, a report based on interviews with 12 senior editors, part of the qualitative materials included with the ASNE study, implied that senior newspaper editors may not understand or recognize this dissatisfaction. In the report, Frank McCulloch, managing editor of the San Francisco Examiner, pointed out that the 12 senior editors held views "remarkably" similar to those expressed by the 205 gay and lesbian journalists about newsroom working conditions and about the preferred language used in coverage of the gay and lesbian community. But, McCulloch did note, "Their views of the quality of gay coverage, however, were significantly different."[8]

The present study, part of a larger study of the relationship between daily newspapers and the gay and lesbian community, follows up on the ASNE study's suggestion that these two groups of professional journalists may have quite dissimilar views regarding their newspapers' coverage of an increasingly powerful segment of their cities and towns. It also investigates whether senior editors, as McCulloch states, share with their gay and lesbian staffers similar views about the preferred language used in coverage of the gay and lesbian community.

## Method

This exploratory study builds on the ASNE survey by asking senior newspaper editors across the country how they view newspaper coverage of issues of concern to gays and lesbians. To determine how divergent are the views of senior editors who make decisions about coverage and those of gay and lesbian journalists reported in the ASNE study, the survey instrument used for this study included twenty-six items appearing in the ASNE study. These items asked respondents to judge their newspapers' coverage of issues, concerns, and events of importance to the gay and lesbian community and to evaluate the language they prefer to use in that coverage.

The sample of 450 senior editors for this study was drawn from a list of the nation's 1,575 daily newspapers, a list arranged in descending order of circulation. This list, provided by Editor & Publisher, was divided into ten segments, with each segment representing approximately ten percent of the total daily newspaper circulation in the United States. Forty-five managing editors, associate editors, city or metro editors, and news editors were selected from the dailies included in each segment of the list. The actual names of the senior editors included in the sample were selected from the 1989 Editor & Publisher International Yearbook. The resulting sample included senior editors who perform a range of editorial and managerial functions and reflected the circulation and geographical diversity of the country's daily newspapers. Those papers with large circulations obviously contributed more than one senior editor to the sample. For those segments from the list containing dailies with small circulations, only one senior editor was selected randomly from several newspapers.

Each of the 450 senior editors selected for the sample were sent a letter in February, 1991, requesting their participation and explaining that they would be receiving a telephone call from an interviewer in the next few weeks. By early May, student interviewers from the Bush Research Center at Ohio University's E.W. Scripps School of Journalism had completed telephone surveys with 227 senior editors.[9] Arranging a convenient time in these busy editors' schedules for the interviews proved difficult; interviews were conducted with more than 50 percent of the editors in the sample. When scheduling difficulties were overcome, however, participation ran more than 90 percent. The results presented here are based on 227 interviews completed from February 28 to May 10, 1991.

## Findings

The present study indicated that views of senior editors differ from those of the gay and lesbian journalists in the ASNE survey over many aspects of coverage, including even terminology used when reporters write about gays and lesbians. These differences emerged in their perceptions of quality of coverage, play of stories, and the treatment of such issues as violence against gays and lesbians, civil rights of lesbians and gays, gay/lesbian rights legislation, political activities of gays and lesbians, and especially events of the local gay community. Managing editors, associate editors, city or metro editors, news editors, and other senior editors interviewed for this study in general were less critical of coverage in all areas, with coverage of AIDS being the only exception, than were the gay and lesbian journalists surveyed for the ASNE study. The senior editors also tended to be less sensitive about descriptive terminology used in newspaper coverage of issues of concern to gays and lesbians.

Both this study of senior editors and the ASNE survey of gay and lesbian journalists asked their respective respondents the question, "Do you think your newspaper devotes enough space to covering the non-medical issues or concerns of lesbians and gays?" Senior editors split on this question, with more than 45 percent saying their newspapers devoted sufficient space to non-medical issues or concerns of lesbians and gays and slightly more than 42 percent saying their newspapers did not. Slightly more than 12 percent did not know. In the ASNE study, however, only 17 percent of the gay and lesbian respondents thought their newspapers did; 83 percent said their newspapers did not.

This mixed pattern that indicated senior editors were moderately dissatisfied with their papers' allotment of space also emerged in their responses to questions about overall reporting and play of stories about issues important to the gay and lesbian community. Both this study of senior editors and the ASNE study of gay and lesbian reporters and editors asked respondents to give overall evaluations of their newspapers' reporting and play of stories on issues and concerns relating to lesbians and gays. The possible responses were "Excellent," "Good," "Fair," and

"Poor." Senior editors rated both their papers' reporting and play more positively than gay and lesbian journalists had.

When asked, "Overall, how would you rate your newspaper's reporting on issues and concerns relating to lesbians and gays?" the senior editors responded as follows. Only 4 percent rated their paper's reporting as excellent, 36 percent rated it good, 48 percent rated it fair, and 12 percent rated it poor. Of the gay and lesbian journalists, 3 percent rated their newspapers' reporting excellent, 26 percent rated it good, 46 percent rated it fair, and 27 percent rated it poor.

When asked, "Overall, how would you rate your newspaper's play of stories on issues and concerns relating to lesbians and gays?" senior editors gave the following evaluation. Nearly 6 percent of the editors rated their newspapers' play of these stories as excellent, more than 42 percent rated it as good, almost 42 percent rated it as fair, and nearly 10 percent rated it as poor. Of the gay and lesbian journalists surveyed in the ASNE study, 3 percent rated their papers' play of stories on issues and concerns relating to lesbians and gays as excellent, 29 percent rated it good, 46 percent rated it fair, and 22 percent rated it poor.

Clearly, the editors, and even more so the ASNE respondents, were not satisfied with the amount of space devoted to non-medical issues or concerns of the gay and lesbian community, with reporting on those issues and concerns, or with play of stories on those issues and concerns. Self-censorship, however, was not seen by the editors as an explanation for what they considered less than ideal performance by their newspapers. With this, their gay and lesbian staffers responding to the earlier study agreed. Both this study of senior editors' views and the ASNE study of gay and lesbian journalists' perceptions of their newspapers' coverage of the gay and lesbian community asked respondents about whether their papers chose not to cover stories when issues relating to gays and lesbians were involved. Neither the editors nor the ASNE respondents suggested that significant censorship occurs involving either local or national stories about issues relating to gays and lesbians.

Senior editors and gay and lesbian journalists surveyed in the two studies were asked, "To your knowledge, during the last year has your newspaper decided not to pursue or chosen to kill a local story because it involved issues relating to gays or lesbians?" Lesss than 2 percent of the editors said their papers had decided against such a local story, nearly 95 percent said it had not occurred, and 3.5 percent didn't know. In the ASNE study, a larger 9 percent of the respondents could remember their newspapers deciding not to pursue a local story involving issues relating to gays and lesbians but a similar 91 percent said it had not occurred.

Both surveys asked, "To your knowledge, during the last year has your newspaper decided not to pursue or chosen to kill a wire service story because it involved issues relating to gays or lesbians?" When asked about national stories, less than 1 percent of the senior editors could remember their newspapers deciding against covering such a wire service story, more than 92 percent said such censorship had not occurred, and more than 6 percent didn't know. When gay and lesbian reporters were asked about this in the ASNE study, 6 percent remembered wire service stories left uncovered because they involved issues relating to gays and lesbians; 94 percent could not.

When questions in this study turned from evaluation of overall coverage to evaluation of coverage of specific issues, responses from senior editors diverged markedly from those gay and lesbian journalists gave to the same questions in the earlier ASNE study. Evaluation of their newspapers' coverage of AIDS provided the only exception to this pattern, with editors actually less positive on this issue than were the gay and lesbian respondents. Despite their responses being slightly more positive than were those of their gay and lesbian staffers, the editors shared with the ASNE respondents similar levels of dissatisfaction with coverage of the lifestyles of lesbians and gays. Editors in this study, however, showed substantial differences with the ASNE respondents on their newspapers' coverage of violence against gays and lesbians, civil rights of lesbians and gays, gay/lesbian rights legislation, and political activities of gays and lesbians. The question about coverage of events in the local gay community resulted in a deep split between the editors in this study--more than 57 percent of whom rated this coverage as fair, good, or excellent--and the gay and lesbian journalists in the ASNE study--85 percent of whom rated coverage of the local gay community as fair or poor. Most significant, 63 percent of the ASNE respondents labeled this coverage poor.

Both the study of senior editors and the ASNE study of gay and lesbian journalists asked their respondents to evaluate their papers' coverage of seven specific issues of particular concern to the gay and lesbian community. Respondents were asked: "Now, we'd like to ask about your newspaper's coverage of several specific issues of particular concern to some gays and lesbians. How would you rate your newspaper's coverage in the following areas?" The specific issues on which they were asked to rate their papers' coverage were: "AIDS," "Violence against lesbians and gays," "Lifestyles of gays and lesbians," "Civil rights of lesbians and gays," "Gay/lesbian rights legislation," "Political activities of gays and lesbians," and "Events of the local gay community." In this series of questions the possible responses were "Excellent," "Good," "Fair," "Poor," and "No opinion." (The responses resulting from this series of items appear in tabular form in the appendix.)

In the case of their newspapers' coverage of AIDS, senior editors and their gay and lesbian staffers closely agreed, with both groups of respondents quite positive about their newspaper's coverage in this area. More than 18 percent of the editors rated this coverage excellent, nearly 52 percent rated it good, more than 25 percent rated it fair, and more than 3 percent rated it poor. Of the ASNE respondents, 26 percent rated AIDS coverage on their papers as excellent, 46 percent rated it good, 19 percent rated it fair, and 9 percent rated it poor.

Of their newspapers' coverage of the lifestyles of gays and lesbians, there also is some agreement between senior editors in this study and gay and lesbian journalists responding to the ASNE survey. Even so, senior editors were slightly more positive about the coverage. Both groups think coverage in this area is weak. Nearly 3 percent of the senior editors interviewed said their papers' coverage was excellent, nearly 14 percent said it was good, almost 37 percent said it was fair, more than 40 percent said it was poor, and slightly more than 6 percent had no opinion. This compares with ratings from the ASNE respondents of 3 percent excellent, 14 percent good, 29 percent fair, 52 percent poor, and 2 percent with no opinion.

When asked about their papers' coverage of violence against lesbians and gays, the opinions of senior editors and their gay and lesbian staffers diverge. Of senior editors, more than 5 percent rated their newspapers' coverage of this issue excellent, more than 25 percent rated it good, nearly 50 percent rated it fair, more than 11 percent rated it poor, and nearly 8 percent had no opinion. Four percent of gay and lesbian journalists considered their papers' coverage of violence against lesbians and gays excellent, 19 percent considered it good, 30 percent considered it fair, 43 percent considered it poor, and 4 percent registered no opinion.

Likewise, the two groups of respondents do not share similar opinions regarding their newspapers' coverage of civil rights of lesbians and gays. Nearly six percent of senior editors rated their papers' coverage excellent, 42 percent rated it good, more than 39 percent rated it fair, nearly 10 percent rated it poor, and more than 3 percent had no opinion. Of the ASNE respondents, 8 percent considered their papers' coverage of civil rights of lesbians and gays excellent, 19 percent considered it good, 36 percent considered it fair, 38 percent considered it poor, and 1 percent had no opinion.

The senior editors and the gay and lesbian journalists demonstrate a similar pattern of differences over their newspapers' coverage of gay/lesbian rights legislation and coverage of political activities of gays and lesbians. Of the editors, more than 6 percent rated coverage of gay/lesbian rights legislation excellent, more than 35 percent rated it good, more than 43 percent rated it fair, more than 10 percent rated it poor, and 4 percent had no opinion. The ASNE respondents again were less positive about their papers' coverage of this issue. Six percent called it excellent, 21 percent called it good, 40 percent called it fair, 32 percent called it poor, and 2 percent had no opinion.

On coverage of the political activities of gays and lesbians, more than 4 percent of the senior editors called their papers' coverage excellent, nearly 29 percent called it good, more than 48 percent called it fair, more than 15 percent called it poor, and more than 3 percent had no opinion. Of the gay and lesbian journalists in the ASNE survey, 2 percent considered coverage of this topic excellent, 17 percent considered it good, 41 percent considered it fair, 40 percent considered it poor, and 2 percent had no opinion.

Evaluation of their newspapers' coverage of events in the local gay community elicited the greatest differences between the views of editors in this study and those of respondents in the ASNE study. Responses from senior editors were clearly more positive than were those obtained from gay and lesbian journalists in the earlier study. Of the editors, more than 3 percent rated their newspapers' coverage excellent, more than 23 percent rated it good, more than 30 percent rated it fair, more than 34 percent rated it poor, and more than 8 percent had no opinion. Gay and lesbian journalists had very different impressions. Of the ASNE respondents, 1 percent called their papers' coverage excellent, 9 percent called it good, 22 percent called it fair, 63 percent called it poor, and 5 percent had no opinion.

Senior editors also were asked in this study to apply several descriptors to their newspapers' typical reporting on the gay and lesbian community, and in every case they painted a far rosier portrait of that reporting than their gay and lesbian staffers had in the ASNE study. While these differences in all but one case were substantial, in applying the descriptor "complete" to their newspapers' reporting, the responses from editors in this study and respondents in the ASNE study were diametrically opposed.

Both surveys presented respondents with nine descriptors to use in rating their newspapers' reporting on issues and concerns relating to lesbians and gays. The editors surveyed in this study and the gay and lesbian journalists in the ASNE study were asked, "How would you describe your newspaper's typical reporting of issues and concerns relating to lesbians and gays?" They were then asked to respond with "Strongly agree," "Agree," "Neutral," "Disagree," "Strongly Disagree," or "Don't know" when given the following descriptors to apply to the reporting: "sensitive," "careful," "balanced," "biased," "aggressive," "imaginative," "sensationalistic," "authoritative," and "complete." (All responses resulting from this series of items appear in tabular form in the appendix. For brevity's sake, only results from the "strongly agree" and "agree" and from the "disagree" and "strongly disagree" categories for this series of items will be reported and compared here.)

In this series of items, the editors' responses came closest to the responses of the gay and lesbian journalists when they were presented with the descriptor "sensitive." More than three quarters of the editors either strongly agreed or agreed that their newspapers' reporting on issues and concerns of gays and lesbians was sensitive. Slightly less than 2 percent either disagreed or strongly disagreed. In the ASNE study, 57 percent of the gay and lesbian journalists strongly agreed or agreed that their newspaper's reporting was sensitive, while 18 percent disagreed or disagreed strongly. Even in this case, the responses when collapsed result in differences approaching 20 percent for both the new "agree" and "disagree" groupings.

The same difference emerges when responses of senior editors and their gay and lesbian staffers are compared for the descriptors "careful" and "balanced," the other two items for which a majority in this study and in the ASNE study strongly agreed or agreed. When "careful" was applied to their newspapers' typical reporting of issues and concerns of importance to lesbians and gays, more than 92 percent of the senior editors either strongly agreed or agreed and less than 1 percent either disagreed or strongly disagreed. Among the gay and lesbian journalists in the ASNE survey, only 57 percent strongly agreed or agreed their newspapers' reporting was "careful"; 20 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Continuing to paint a rosier portrait than the gay and lesbian journalists, more than 80 percent of the editors responding in this study strongly agreed or agreed that their newspapers' reporting on issues and concerns of gays and lesbians was "balanced." Only slightly more than 4 percent of the senior editors disagreed or strongly disagreed. Of the ASNE respondents, 53 percent either strongly agreed or agreed with the statement that their papers' reporting of issues and concerns of lesbians and gays was "balanced." Fully one quarter of the gay and lesbian journalists either disagreed or disagreed strongly.

When the opposing descriptor "biased" was applied to their newspapers' reporting on issues and concerns of lesbians and gays, similar differences were observed between responses of the senior editors and their gay and lesbian staffers. More than 85 percent of the editors disagreed or strongly disagreed with the resulting statement, while slightly more than 5 percent agreed strongly or agreed. Of the respondents in the ASNE study, just under half disagreed or strongly disagreed that their newspapers' reporting was "biased" and 16 percent strongly agreed or agreed.

This same pattern of strongly differing responses occurred in both studies when the two groups of respondents were asked to apply the descriptor "sensationalistic" to their papers' reporting on issues and concerns of lesbians and gays. In this study, more than 92 percent of the senior editors disagreed or strongly disagreed that their newspaper's reporting was "sensationalistic" and just over 2 percent strongly agreed or agreed. In the ASNE study, however, only 62 percent of the gay and lesbian journalists disagreed or strongly disagreed and 16 percent either strongly agreed or agreed that their papers' reporting was "sensationalistic."

The senior editors seemed defensive about the possibility that their papers' reporting could be labeled "biased" or "sensationalistic." They proved more open to criticizing their papers when asked to evaluate how "aggressive" and how "imaginative" was the reporting on issues and concerns of lesbians and gays. Still their responses to both of these descriptors were far more sanguine than were those of gay and lesbian journalists in the ASNE study. Of the editors, 15 percent strongly agreed or agreed that their papers' reporting was "aggressive" and nearly half disagreed or strongly disagreed. In the ASNE study, only 10 percent of the respondents strongly agreed or agreed and 72 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that their papers' reporting in this area was "aggressive."

Both senior editors in this study and gay and lesbian journalists in the ASNE study responded to the descriptor "imaginative" in much the same way as they did to the descriptor "aggressive" when applied to their newspapers' reporting. When asked, more than 22 percent of the editors strongly agreed or agreed that reporting was imaginative and again nearly half (46 percent) disagreed or strongly disagreed. Far fewer gay and lesbian journalists (10 percent) strongly agreed or agreed that their newspapers' typical reporting on issues and concerns relating to lesbians and gays was "imaginative." And again, 72 percent of the respondents in the ASNE study disagreed or strongly disagreed with the suggestion that their paper's reporting was imaginative.

When presented with the descriptor "authoritative" the editors in this study and the gay and lesbian journalists in the earlier study both were less critical of their papers, although the editors were still far more generous. The editors split rather evenly on this descriptor. More than 33 percent either strongly agreed or agreed that their paper's reporting in this area was "authoritative," and more than 29 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. Of the gay and lesbian journalists, only 21 percent strongly agreed or agreed that their newspapers' reporting on issues and concerns relating to lesbians and gays was "authoritative." Exactly half of the ASNE respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with this descriptor.

The present study found that, in completing this series of survey items, responses from senior editors showed the greatest difference with those of respondents in the ASNE study on the item describing their papers' reporting as "complete." Responses of senior editors split nearly evenly with more than 38 percent strongly agreeing or agreeing and more than 33 percent disagreeing or strongly disagreeing that their papers' reporting on issues and concerns relating to lesbians and gays was "complete." In comparison, only 13 percent of the gay and lesbian journalists strongly agreed or agreed and 72 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed with the suggestion that their papers' reporting on these issues and concerns was "complete." Differences in the responses of the two groups were almost mutually exclusive.

The terminology preferred by senior editors in reporting on issues and concerns of interest to gays and lesbians is the final area addressed in this study, an area also addressed by the ASNE study of gay and lesbian reporters and editors. The views of editors in this study and the opinions of their gay and lesbian staffers in the ASNE study about preferred terminology to use in reporting on the gay and lesbian community differ every bit as strongly as did their views of the quality of their papers' reporting on issues and concerns relating to lesbians and gays. In several items regarding terminology, responses of the senior editors were exactly the opposite of responses from gay and lesbian journalists.

In the items covering terminology in both studies, respondents were given five phrases or terms and asked to indicate whether the phrases were "Preferable terms," "Acceptable terms," "Prejudiced terms," or if they had "No opinion" regarding the phrase. The phrases or terms were "Gays and lesbians," "Gays (referring to men and women)," "Homosexual," "AIDS sufferers," and "People with AIDS." (The complete range of responses resulting from this series of items appears in tabular form in the appendix.)

Responses of the two groups to the terms "Gays and lesbians," "Homosexual," and "People with AIDS" were strikingly different. When asked about use of "Gays and lesbians," slightly more than 36 percent of senior editors judged it a preferable term and nearly 61 percent judged it an acceptable term. Nearly the inverse was the case for responses by gay and lesbian journalists in the ASNE study. There 68 percent judged "Gays and lesbians" a preferred term and 29 percent considered it an acceptable term.

Similar inversions occurred when senior editors were asked about the use of "Homosexual." More than 8 percent said it was a preferable term, more than 76 percent said it was an acceptable term, and more than 11 percent said it was a prejudiced term. Of gay and lesbian journalists, 4 percent found "Homosexual" a preferable term, 59 percent found it an acceptable term, and 31 percent found it a prejudiced term.

Much like their responses to the use of "Gays and lesbians," the responses of senior editors to the use of "People with AIDS" were nearly the exact inverse of the responses of gay and lesbian journalists. More than 26 percent of senior editors found "People with AIDS" a preferred term, but 69 percent of the respondents in the ASNE study found it a preferred term. While more than 60 percent of the editors in this study considered "People with AIDS" an acceptable term, only 26 percent of gays and lesbian journalists had in the earlier study. Clearly, "People with AIDS" is the overwhelming choice for the ASNE respondents.

This inversion did not occur in the responses of the senior editors and their gay and lesbian staffers to the terms "Gays (referring to men and women)" and "AIDS Sufferers." Here the responses from the two groups, while slightly different, are parallel one another. When asked about use of "Gays (referring to men and women)," nearly 9 percent of the senior editors in this study considered this a preferable term, more than 68 percent considered it an acceptable term, and nearly 12 percent considered it a prejudiced term. This parallels the 26 percent of the gay and lesbian respondents in the ASNE study who considered it a preferable term, 59 percent who considered it an acceptable term, and 11 percent who considered it a prejudiced term.

Senior editors in this study and respondents in the ASNE study had nearly identical reactions to the use of "AIDS sufferers." When asked about "AIDS sufferers," more than 3 percent of senior editors considered it a preferable term, more than 39 percent considered it an acceptable term, more than 45 percent considered it a prejudiced term, and more than 12 percent had no opinion on its use. Of gay and lesbian journalists responding, 3 percent found "AIDs sufferers" a preferable term, 33 percent found it an acceptable term, 52 percent found it a prejudiced term, and 12 percent had no opinion.

## Discussion

The small size of the sample in this exploratory study of senior editors and the voluntary nature of the sample in ASNE's pilot study of gay and lesbian journalists limit the interpretation to which these findings can be subjected. Still, from this comparison of the responses of these two very different groups of professional journalists, some clear patterns emerge and merit further study. While senior editors generally expressed quite different views than their gay and lesbian staffers about their newspapers' coverage of the gay and lesbian community, these differences--often extreme--appear to result more from the editors' ignorance of that community's concerns and activities than from hostility toward gays and lesbians. Several responses from the senior editors indicate a genuine interest in covering the gay and lesbian community fairly, although some responses suggest the editors equate or confuse coverage of AIDS with coverage of the gay and lesbian community. Finally, responses of senior editors and their gay and lesbian staffers to items included in these surveys coincide in just enough instances to indicate the ASNE respondents evaluated their newspapers' relationship with the gay and lesbian community primarily as journalists who shared professional values similar to those of their editors. The gay and lesbian journalists in the ASNE study did not respond primarily as members or representatives of their politically and socially active gay and lesbian community. Like their senior editors, the gay and lesbian journalists who chose to participate in the ASNE study are interested in fair, accurate, and thorough reporting.

The responses of senior editors' to the series of questions about the use of terminology in reporting on issues and concerns of the gay and lesbian community is particularly revealing. When compared to the responses of gay and lesbian journalists, the editor's responses indicate a lack of knowledge about what gays and lesbians prefer. This suggests they do not talk with their gay and lesbian staffers; mix with other members of this "invisible" community; or read any of the recent books describing the issues, concerns, and language preferences of the gay community. If they did understand the preferences of gays and lesbians, if they did talk with the gay and lesbian journalists, their responses would be far more congruent with those of the ASNE respondents. The editors have no reason to prefer "Gays and Lesbians" in reporting 32 percent less frequently than the ASNE respondents did. They have no reason to judge "homosexual" a prejudiced term 20 percent less often than did the ASNE respondents. And they have no reason to prefer "People with AIDS" 43 percent less frequently than the ASNE respondents did. Interestingly, on the two terms on which they more closely approximate the response pattern of the ASNE respondents, there are connotative cues to guide the editors. "Gays (referring to men and women)" doesn't mesh with the common knowledge that the term normally refers to men. Likewise, the editors are tipped off by "sufferers" in AIDS sufferers. Many people, including these senior editors, would consider "Sufferers," much like "victim," to have negative connotations. If they had understood the position of the gay and lesbian community regarding the other items in this series, their responses would most likely have followed the pattern created by the ASNE respondents.

This suggestion that the editors are responding out of ignorance rather than homophobia finds reinforcement in their evaluations of the various descriptors they applied to their newspapers' typical reporting on issues and concerns relating to gays and lesbians. They clearly viewed their newspapers as "sensitive" in this reporting, and their gay and lesbian staffers in responding to the ASNE survey substantially agreed. The editors also believed their papers are "careful" and "balanced," and not "biased" or "sensationalistic"; but here their responses drift further from those of the ASNE respondents. Why? Again, these are judgments that, if answered critically, require knowledge of the gay and lesbian community. Papers can be "sensitive" without knowing very much. Interestingly, the responses of the respondents in this study and in the ASNE study moved a bit closer together when the descriptors, "aggressive" and "imaginative," are applied to their newspapers' typical reporting. Here the editors cannot help but recognize that their newspapers' reporting on issues and concerns of gays and lesbians doesn't meet these proactive journalistic ideals. On the final descriptors "authoritative" and "complete" the editors' responses split closely between "agree" and "disagree," with some of the editors perhaps thinking all the AIDS stories made their papers' reporting on the gays and lesbians complete and authoritative. The gay and lesbian journalists certainly didn't agree, especially when "complete" was applied. It is significant that the variation on "complete" was so great between the editors and the ASNE respondents. If the newspapers and their editors lacked knowledge of the gay and lesbian community, why expect their paper's coverage to be "complete"? Viewing the editors and their papers as lacking in knowledge rather than homophobic matches the judgments offered by others who have written about coverage of the gay and lesbian community. As Lindsy Van Gelder, now a free-lance writer who openly admits she is a lesbian, writes, "I think a lot of journalists realize that the ethical parameters are shifting: they're simply not sure what the new rules should be."[10]

That editors indicated such lack of knowledge of the gay community suggests that they seldom take advantage of their gay and lesbian staffers as sources of information, as journalists with special insights into the community. This conclusion fits with results in the ASNE study that found 62 percent of the respondents had never been asked by the managements for advice on stories dealing with gay/lesbian issues and 73 percent had never been assigned a story dealing with gay/lesbian issues.[11] Editors have attempted to be sensitive to the gay and lesbian community, but they haven't been particularly aggressive about understanding its issues, concerns, and events. Sensitive reporting may not offend, but in and of itself sensitive reporting also often does not inform in a complete, authoritative, aggressive, or imaginative way.

It's hardly surprising that gay and lesbian journalists in the ASNE study, because of their special knowledge of their community, would have different views of this terminology and judge their papers' reporting more harshly than the senior editors in this study did. Differences might be expected between upper management and any lower-level editors or reporters on the basis of many factors, including age, sex, education, or power relationship. What's particularly helpful about comparisons of responses in these two studies are the items on which senior editors and their gay and lesbian staffers respond similarly. This congruence suggests that the editors and their gay and lesbian staffers share some professional values, and that these sympathetic staffers might teach senior editors a great deal about covering the invisible gay and lesbian community. It also suggests that the ASNE respondents should be taken as seriously when their responses differed from the senior editors and they are when they coincide.

One item in the series of questions asking respondents to rate their newspapers' coverage of specific issues of concern to gays and lesbians underlines the seriousness with which the gay and lesbian journalists completed the ASNE study. When asked to evaluate their paper's coverage of AIDS, there was only slight differences between the responses of the senior editors and their gay and lesbian staffers. The gay and lesbian journalists were very willing to give their papers credit for doing a good job. In fact, as was noted earlier, they rated their papers' coverage of AIDS higher than the senior editors did. If they agreed with the editors in this case, why would they not agree on other matters if newspapers were doing an equally good job as they were in covering AIDS. What they recognized, better than the senior editors, was that extensive coverage of AIDS dominated reporting on all other issues of concern to gays and lesbians. Their ratings of the remaining issues in this series of items, compared to the rosier ratings of the senior editors, reflects the one-dimensional nature of coverage of gays and lesbians following the outbreak of AIDS. There is no reason to assume that the respondents to the ASNE study changed their professional values or standards when they reacted to other items in the earlier survey.

The senior editors' lack of knowledge about the gay and lesbian community also helps explain the similar response regarding AIDS and the differences regarding the other issues in this series of items. The senior editors grew to understand the AIDS epidemic, which had become part of mainstream American life. They did not understand the gay and lesbian community and its issues, concerns, and events. That 69 percent of the gay and lesbian journalists rated coverage of events of the local gay community "poor" supports the conclusion that the senior editors respond out of ignorance more than homophobia. To cover events of the local gay community would require more knowledge of what is occurring in the gay and lesbian community than would any of the other issues or concerns mentioned in this series of questions. That only 43 percent of the senior editors but 83 percent of the gay and lesbian journalists felt their newspapers did not devote enough space to non-medical issues or concerns of gays and lesbians further emphasizes newspapers' lack of knowledge about this community. Editors and their papers simply do not understand the issues and concerns of the gay and lesbian community.

Other examples of agreement offer convincing evidence that the respondents in the ASNE study were applying journalistic standards to their newspapers' coverage of issues and concerns of gays and lesbians. While senior editors rated their newspapers overall reporting and play of stories on issues and concerns relating to lesbians and gays more positively than the gay and lesbian editors did in the ASNE study, both groups expressed similar patterns of dissatisfaction. And there were nearly identical responses from the editors and their gay and lesbian staffers when they noted little censorship of either local or national stories related to gays and lesbians occurred at their papers. Newspapers were clearly not perceived as intentionally censoring information about the gay and lesbian community.

Lack of censorship is another indication that poor communication between senior editors and gay and lesbian journalists in great measure seems to explain why participants in the ASNE study criticized their newspapers coverage of issues, concerns, and events in the gay and lesbian community. Gay and lesbian journalists were not activists lobbying for their community. Their considered journalistic judgments, found in their responses to the ASNE survey, should be respected by people in an industry which is seeking to maintain readership, circulation, and advertising. Further efforts should be made by editors to utilize the knowledge and talents of their gay and lesbian staffers to cover their communities and to educate others at their newspapers.

## Appendix

### Table 1
### Evaluation of Newspaper's Coverage of Specific Issues of Concern to Gays and Lesbians with ASNE Study Results in Parentheses

(in percent)

| | Excellent | Good | Fair | Poor | No Opinion |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| AIDS | 18.6 (26) | 51.8 (46) | 25.2 (19) | 3.5 (9) | 0.9 (1) |
| Violence against Gays and Lesbians | 5.3 (4) | 25.3 (19) | 49.8 (30) | 11.6 (34) | 8.0 (4) |
| Lifestyles of Lesbians and Gays | 2.7 (3) | 13.8 (14) | 36.9 (29) | 40.4 (52) | 6.2 (2) |
| Civil Rights of Lesbians and Gays | 5.8 (8) | 42.0 (19) | 39.4 (36) | 9.7 (38) | 3.1 (1) |
| Gay/Lesbian Rights Legislation | 6.7 (6) | 35.1 (21) | 43.6 (40) | 10.7 (32) | 4.0 (2) |
| Political Activities of Gays and Lesbians | 4.4 (2) | 28.9 (17) | 48.0 (41) | 15.2 (40) | 3.6 (2) |
| Events of the Local Gay Community | 3.1 (1) | 23.6 (9) | 30.7 (22) | 34.2 (63) | 8.4 (5) |

### Table 2
### Evaluation of Newspaper's Typical Reporting of Issues and Concerns Relating to Lesbians and Gays with ASNE Study Results in Parentheses

(in percent)

| | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | Don't Know |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Sensitive | 16.8 (7) | 61.1 (50) | 17.3 (24) | 0.9 (13) | 0.9 (5) | 3.1 (0) |
| Complete | 6.2 (1) | 32.3 (12) | 25.2 (14) | 29.6 (53) | 3.5 (20) | 3.1 (0) |
| Careful | 21.7 (6) | 70.8 (51) | 5.3 (23) | 0.0 (15) | 0.4 (5) | 1.8 (0) |
| Balanced | 15.0 (6) | 65.5 (47) | 12.4 (22) | 3.1 (21) | 1.3 (5) | 2.7 (0) |
| Biased | 0.0 (2) | 5.3 (14) | 8.4 (35) | 51.3 (37) | 34.1 (12) | 0.9 (1) |
| Aggressive | 3.5 (1) | 11.5 (9) | 33.6 (16) | 38.5 (38) | 11..1 (34) | 1.8 (1) |
| Imaginative | 1.3 (1) | 20.8 (9) | 28.3 (18) | 35.4 (37) | 10.6 (35) | 3.5 (1) |
| Sensationalistic | 0.4 (3) | 1.8 (13) | 3.5 (22) | 42.5 (39) | 50.0 (23) | 1.8 (1) |
| Authoritative | 3.5 (3) | 29.6 (18) | 33.2 (28) | 24.8 (34) | 4.4 (16) | 4.4 (2) |

### Table 3
### Preferred Terminology
### with ASNE Study Results in Parentheses
### (in percent)

| | Preferred Term | Acceptable Term | Prejudiced Term | No Opinion |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gays and Lesbians | 36.1 (68) | 60.8 (29) | 2.2 (1) | 0.9 (2) |
| Gays (referring to men & women) | 8.8 (26) | 68.7 (59) | 11.9 (11) | 10.6 (4) |
| Homosexual | 7.5 (4) | 76.7 (59) | 11.5 (31) | 4.4 (6) |
| AIDS Sufferers | 3.1 (3) | 39.2 (33) | 45.4 (52) | 12.3 (12) |
| People with AIDS | 26.4 (69) | 60.4 (26) | 7.9 (1) | 5.3 (4) |

Notes

[1] This study was supported in part with funding from the Bush Research Center, Ohio University, Guido H. Stempel III, director.

[2] Loren Ghiglione et al., Alternatives: Gays & Lesbians in the Newsroom (Washington: American Society of Newspaper Editors, 1990).

[3] Ransdell Pierson, "Uptight about Gay News," Columbia Journalism Review, March/April 1982, points out that reluctance of gay and lesbian journalists to reveal their sexual orientation causes them to avoid assignments about their own gay and lesbian community. Frank McCulloch, Alternatives, p.44, also notes the invisibility of gays and lesbians in the newsroom.

[4] This is the argument of Randy Shilts, And the Band Played On: Politics, People and the AIDS Epidemic (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987); Edward Albert, "Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome: The Victim and the Press," Studies in Communication 3: 154-155 (1986); Simon Watney, "The Spectacle of AIDS," AIDS: Cultural Analysis, Cultural Activism, ed. Douglas Crimp (Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 1988), p.72; Stephen Klaidman and Tom L. Beauchamp, The Virtuous Journalist (New York and London: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 147-151; and Dennis Altman, AIDS in the Mind of America (New York: Anchor Press/Doubleday), pp. 16-21.

[5] Aarons, Alternatives, p. 5. See also American Demographics, June, 1988, pp. 20-21, for data supporting Aaron's contention that the gay and lesbian community has considerable discretionary income, high levels of education, and influential professional positions.

[6] Aarons, pp. 8-9, and Lee Stinnett, Alternatives, pp. 75-78, discuss the methodology for the ASNE study.

[7] Aarons, pp. 9-12.

[8] McCulloch, pp. 43-45.

[9] This is an ongoing study and interviews are continuing.

[10] Lindsy Van Gelder, "Straight or Gay, Stick to the Facts," Columbia Journalism Review, November/December, 1990, p. 52.

[11] Alternatives, p. 82.

# Predictors of Job Burnout in Reporters and Copy Editors

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## Abstract

This exploratory study applied a widely used psychological test to measure job burnout among a sample of reporters and copy editors at five daily newspapers of dissimilar size. Findings indicated size of paper, age, job title, total years of experience, income, and job satisfaction significantly relate to job burnout. A profile of a journalist 'at risk' for job burnout is provided. Implications for newspaper managers are discussed.

Job burnout is a syndrome of physical and emotional exhaustion produced by excessive demands on the energy, strength and resources of the individual. A relationship among job satisfaction, job burnout and job attrition has been previously noted. It would appear that job satisfaction, job stress, job burnout and job attrition form a behavioral continuum. While job stress and job satisfaction have been studied in the field of journalism, no research study has examine job burnout in journalists.

In this study, reporters and copy editors at five daily newspapers of dissimilar size were asked to complete a demographic questionnaire and the Maslach Burnout Inventory. A total of 110 journalists took part in the study.

Results of this study indicate that the employee most likely to suffer from burnout is a young, entry-level journalist working as a copy editor at a small daily newspaper. However, other variables were also found to significantly relate to job burnout. These include age, job title, total years of experience, income and job satisfaction.

Newspaper managers can benefit by being able to identify those "at risk" for burnout and assist those already suffering from the syndrome.

# Predictors of Job Burnout in Reporters and Copy Editors

## Review of the Literature

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between certain predictor variables and job burnout among print journalists at five daily newspapers of dissimilar size. The predictor variables included size of paper, type of job, age, gender, income level, years of experience, educational level, and career attitudes.

Job burnout, as a topic of study, has had a relatively brief history. Freudenberger[1] provided much of the impetus for contemporary research with his reviews of job stress. Freudenberger indicated that job burnout is a syndrome of physical and emotional exhaustion produced by excessive demands on the energy, strength and resources of the individual.

A relationship among job satisfaction, job burnout and job attrition has been previously noted.[2] It would appear that job satisfaction, job stress, job burnout and job attrition form a behavioral continuum. In research on other professions that encounter a high level of stress, the sequence for this continuum is as follows: When individuals encounter a high level of job stress for a long period of time, their ability to cope with the stress becomes exhausted.

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[1] Herbert J. Freudenberger, "The Staff Burnout Syndrome in Alternative Institutions," Psychotherapy: Theory, Research and Practice, 12:72-83 (Spring 1975).

[2] Michael R. Daley, "Burnout: Smouldering Problem in Protective Services," Social Work, 24:375-379 (September 1979).

They display psychosomatic complaints and a lack of concern about their work. Other symptoms include emotional exhaustion, treating their co-workers as objects, and low levels of job satisfaction and personal accomplishment.

When these responses persist over time they develop into a syndrome labeled "job burnout".[3] Job burnout can be characterized as a type of withdrawal syndrome from work. For instance, employees begin to disassociate themselves from their work and their colleagues. One probable result of job burnout is to quit the job; in effect, to completely withdrawal from work.

The experimental study of job burnout has been influenced by the development of the Maslach Burnout Inventory.[4] This inventory is designed to measure job burnout. It has three subscales: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment. Emotional exhaustion is defined as the feeling of being emotionally overextended and exhausted by one's work. Depersonalization is defined as an unfeeling and impersonal response toward the recipients of one's service, treatment or instruction.

[3] Christina Maslach and Susan E. Jackson, Maslach Burnout Inventory Manual, 2nd ed. (Palo Alto, Ca.: Consulting Psychologists Press, 1986), p. 1.

[4] Christina Maslach and Susan E. Jackson, Maslach Burnout Inventory, (Palo Alto, Ca.: Consulting Psychologists Press, 1981).

Personal accomplishment is defined as a feeling of competence and successful achievement in one's work with people. Individuals who demonstrate the syndrome of burnout have high levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization but low levels of personal accomplishment.

One of the underlying assumptions of the Maslach Burnout Inventory is that it has some type of predictive relationship with job attrition. Thus, one purpose of measuring job burnout is to develop some type of profile of who is "at risk" for leaving the job. In professions with high job turnover it may be especially critical to develop such profiles and to develop intervention procedures to avoid high levels of job turnover.

While job stress and job satisfaction have been studied in the field of journalism, no research study has examined job burnout in journalists. The purpose of the present study is to measure job burnout and job satisfaction levels among print journalists at five daily newspapers of dissimilar sizes.

Previous research studies have examined job stress and job satisfaction among journalists. Studies in this area have focused on narrow groups including samples of German journalists, Colorado journalists, and newspaper women.

In 1977, a study of Bavarian journalists including editors and managing editors, found that more than one-half of those interviewed felt under time pressure at least occasionally. And 49% considered their volume of work too extensive, including taking some work home. In addition, 31% stated they had family problems due to their jobs.[5]

Two studies of journalists used Herzberg's model of Motivation Hygiene as the framework for their studies of job satisfaction. Herzberg's Motivation Hygiene Theory claimed that both intrinsic and extrinsic satisfaction levels were crucial in the evaluation of overall job satisfaction.[6] Job satisfaction was determined by the feelings that the individual has concerning the content of his job. These included task achievement, recognition for achievement, intrinsic interest in the task, increased task responsibility, advancement and occupational growth. These satisfiers were called motivators.

Job dissatisfaction was determined by the feelings the individual has concerning the context of his job. These included company policies and administration; technical supervision; working conditions; salary; interpersonal relations; job security and personal life. These dissatisfiers were called hygienes.

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[5] Heinz-Dietrich Fischer, "State of Health and Stress Factors in Occupation: The Mass Media Profession," Social Science Medicine, 21:1367-1371 (1985).

[6] Hanafi M. Soliman, "Motivation-hygiene Theory of Job Attitudes: an Empirical Investigation and an Attempt to Reconcile Both the One- and Two-factor Theories of Job Attitudes," Journal of Applied Psychology, 54:454-461 (October 1970).

Two studies of journalists have addressed the Herzberg model. Barrett[7] looked at levels of job satisfaction expressed by American newspaper women. Using Herzberg's theory, she found both intrinsic and extrinsic satisfaction levels were crucial in the evaluation of overall job satisfaction. The intrinsic values ranked among the most important criteria for the next job included the opportunity to advance, self-direction and independence, and personal interest and fulfillment. The extrinsic values ranked most important were a good salary and competent management. Barrett also found a significantly higher percentage of those with bachelor's degrees did not plan to remain in the newspaper field, compared to those without degrees.

In 1978, Shaver[8] applied Herzberg's theory to 1960 and 1970 journalism graduates. The findings were consistent with the Motivation Hygiene Theory. Satisfaction was found to be the result of the presence of positive motivators (the intrinsic factors such as achievement, recognition, possibility of growth). Further, Shaver found dissatisfaction the result of the presence of negative hygiene factors such as supervision, quality of working conditions and salary. Overall, the level of job satisfaction was found to be generally positive, with the possibility for growth the most important factor contributing to satisfaction. Poorly handled company policy and administration was found to be the most important factor in job dissatisfaction.

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[7] Grace H. Barrett, "Job Satisfaction Among Newspaperwomen," Journalism Quarterly, 16:593-599 (Autumn 1984).

[8] Harold C. Shaver, "Job Satisfaction and Dissatisfaction Among Journalism Graduates," Journalism Quarterly, 55:54-61 (Spring 1978).

"Bureaucratization of newswork" was found to be one of the principle sources of job dissatisfaction among journalists in a 1976 study. Johnstone[9] interviewed 1,313 journalists, looking at increasing centralization and job dissatisfaction due to decreased autonomy. The study found journalists on the whole seemed happier when they worked in smaller organizations. These smaller settings, he found, seemed to give the individual more freedom and a voice in decision-making.

Another study comparing public relations professionals and print journalists, found on the whole journalists were more dissatisfied.[10] Journalists especially expressed dissatisfaction with professional criteria such as the "opportunity to learn new skills and knowledge," and "having a superior who appreciates time spent improving."

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[9] John W.C. Johnstone, "Organizational Constraints of Newswork," _Journalism Quarterly_, 53:5-13 (Spring 1976).

[10] Oguz Nayman, Blaine K McKee and Dan L. Lattimore, "PR Personnel and Print Journalists: A Comparison of Professionalism," _Journalism Quarterly_, 54:492-497 (Fall 1977).

A questionnaire designed to measure job satisfaction in the newsroom was developed in 1958 by Dr. Chilton R. Bush. This test was designed to assist newspaper management in making the work environment more satisfying.[11]

## Method

### Subjects

The subjects were 110 reporters and copy editors from five dailies. Five newspapers of dissimilar size and publication schedules were included in this study. The largest newspaper, a metropolitan daily, had a weekday circulation of 252,260. The second largest, another morning paper, had a weekday circulation of 141,800. The third largest paper had an evening circulation of 50,955. The fourth largest paper had a morning circulation of 42,709. The smallest, another evening paper, had a circulation of 23.110.[12]

Only full-time employees were surveyed. These employees included beat and general assignment reporters and copy editors with both editing and layout and design duties. The total population of reporters and copy editors was 160. There were a total of 117 full-time reporters and 43 copy editors in the sample. The overall response rate was 68%.

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[11] Merrill Samuelson, "A Standardized Test to Measure Job Satisfaction in the Newsroom," Journalism Quarterly, 39:285-291 (Summer 1962).

[12] 1990 Editor and Publisher Yearbook.

### Instruments

The survey instrument was divided into two sections. The first section requested demographic and career information from the respondents. Items in this section included age, gender, title, income level, educational background and years of experience. The career information items included the following statement: *Do you plan to leave journalism within the next five years?*

The subject was asked to indicate yes or no to this question. The other career items were obtained by a simple summative score on each of the following items, ranked from 1 to 5 on a Likert type scale:

*I am satisfied with my present work;*

*I am working in the kind of job I wanted when I was a student;*

*The world of work is different from what I expected.*

*If I had it to do over, I would still choose a career in journalism.*

The second section of the instrument presented the Maslach Burnout Inventory. The scoring procedure for the MBI in this study was the frequency system.[13]

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[13] Maslach and Jackson, 1986.

The MBI is divided into three separate subscales: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment. Internal consistency reliability measures were reported by Maslach and Jackson as .90 for emotional exhaustion, .79 for depersonalization, and .71 for personal accomplishment. The highest level criterion related validity reported in the test manual was .68.[14] Scores at the upper end of the scale on (EE) emotional exhaustion and (DP) depersonalization indicate high levels of job burnout. Scores at the lower end of the scale on (PA) personal accomplishment indicate high levels of job burnout.

### Data Analysis

Correlations and analysis of covariance were the types of data analyses used in this study. The SAS statistical program was used to perform the data analyses.[15]

[14] Maslach and Jackson, 1986.

[15] SAS/STAT User's Guide, (Cary, NC: SAS Institute Inc, 1988).

## Results

Table 1 presents the results of a correlation analysis for all the independent variables by the three dependent variables that comprise the Maslach Burnout Inventory. The top line of each level of the table presents the correlation value with the second line presenting the probability value.

Table 1

Correlation Table

Dependent variables

| Independent variables | | EE | DP | PA |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| PAPER | r= | -0.25299 | 0.00397 | 0.10534 |
| | p= | 0.0120 | 0.9690 | 0.3019 |
| AGE | | -0.27338 | -0.26029 | 0.17965 |
| | | 0.0065 | 0.0096 | 0.0767 |
| SEX | | 0.09801 | 0.04517 | -0.21077 |
| | | 0.3370 | 0.6587 | 0.0372 |
| TITLE | | 0.23858 | 0.10663 | 0.00470 |
| | | 0.0180 | 0.2960 | 0.9633 |
| CURRENT | | -0.13987 | -0.24124 | -0.01713 |
| | | 0.1812 | 0.0198 | 0.8705 |
| YEARS | | -0.25153 | -0.21161 | 0.19667 |
| | | 0.0134 | 0.0385 | 0.0548 |
| EDUC | | 0.08979 | -0.02170 | 0.00379 |
| | | 0.3793 | 0.8321 | 0.9705 |
| UMAJOR | | 0.11380 | 0.00880 | -0.10084 |
| | | 0.3057 | 0.9371 | 0.3644 |
| INCOME | | -0.29367 | -0.08008 | 0.09260 |
| | | 0.0039 | 0.4405 | 0.3721 |
| LEAVE | | -0.38073 | -0.35993 | 0.13263 |
| | | 0.0001 | 0.0003 | 0.2001 |
| SAT | | 0.67977 | 0.29177 | -0.28881 |
| | | 0.0001 | 0.0036 | 0.0039 |
| WORK | | 0.03950 | -0.05950 | -0.06270 |
| | | 0.7009 | 0.5626 | 0.5418 |
| EXPECT | | -0.21015 | -0.21707 | 0.19420 |
| | | 0.0378 | 0.0318 | 0.0553 |
| CAREER | | 0.42773 | 0.14990 | -0.21882 |
| | | 0.0001 | 0.1428 | 0.0313 |

### Size of Paper

As shown in the above table, the size of the newspaper had a significant relationship with (EE) emotional exhaustion. The subjects who worked for the larger newspapers had significantly lower emotional exhaustion scores than did those subjects who worked for the smaller papers.

### Age

There was a significant relationship between age and both (EE) emotional exhaustion and (DP) depersonalization. The older individuals demonstrated lower levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization.

### Sex

There was a significant relationship between sex and (PA) personal accomplishment. This finding indicates that males had significantly higher scores on personal accomplishment than did females.

### Title

There was a significant relationship between job title and emotional exhaustion. Copy editors had significantly higher levels of emotional exhaustion than did reporters.

### Years of Experience

There was a significant relationship between years of experience in one's current job and (DP) depersonalization. In addition, there was also a significant relationship between the total years of experience in journalism and emotional exhaustion. There was a significant relationship between age and depersonalization. Those subjects with more years of experience demonstrated lower levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization.

### Income

Income had a significant inverse relationship with (EE) emotional exhaustion. Those subjects with the highest income levels tended to have lower scores on emotional exhaustion.

**Career Items**

There was a significant positive relationship between an expressed intention to leave the field of journalism and emotional exhaustion. Those subjects who indicated that they intended to leave the field had significantly higher levels of emotional exhaustion. There was a significant positive relationship between expressed intention to leave the field of journalism and depersonalization. Those subjects who said they intended to leave the field had significantly higher levels of depersonalization.

There was a significant inverse relationship between the subjects' expressed level of job satisfaction and emotional exhaustion. Those subjects who expressed a high level of job satisfaction had significantly lower scores on emotional exhaustion. There was a significant inverse relationship between the subjects' expressed level of job satisfaction and depersonalization. Those subject who expressed a high level of job satisfaction had significantly lower scores on depersonalization. There was a significant positive relationship between job satisfaction and personal accomplishment. Those subjects who had higher levels of job satisfaction had higher levels of personal accomplishment.

There was a significant relationship between emotional exhaustion and the statement: "The world of work is different from what I expected." The subjects who agreed with this statement had significantly higher levels of emotional exhaustion. There was also a significant relationship between this item and depersonalization. The subjects who agreed with this statement had higher levels of depersonalization.

There was a significant relationship between statement: "If I had it to do over, I would still choose a career in journalism" and the variable of emotional exhaustion. Those who affirmatively indicated that they would go into journalism again had significantly lower levels of emotional exhaustion. There was a significant relationship between this item and personal accomplishment. Those subjects who answered in the affirmative to this item had higher levels of personal accomplishment.

All other relationships in Table 1 were not significant. Educational level and type of degree earned were not significantly related to job burnout.

**Analysis of covariance**

Additional statistical analyses were performed on the different types of job categories within the field of journalism. Separate analyses of covariance were completed to determine difference between the following categories: reporters and copy editors; general assignment reporters and beat reporters; copy editors who do just copy editing and those who do copy editing, layout and design. Years of experience in journalism was used as the covariate in the analysis.

Table 2 presents the results of the analysis of covariance for the differences between reporters and copy editors.

Table 2

Analysis of Covariance

Reporters versus Copy Editors

| | F Value | Pr > F |
|---|---|---|
| EE | 9.92 | 0.0022 |
| DP | 5.73 | 0.0187 |
| PA | 3.90 | 0.0514 |

The results of Table 2 indicate that there were significant differences between reporters and copy editors in their levels of job burnout. On two of the three covariance models, copy editors had significantly higher levels of job burnout.

Table 3 presents the results of the analysis of covariance on differences between general assignment and beat reporters.

Table 3

Analysis of Covariance

General Assignment vs. Beat Reporter

| | F Value | Pr > F |
|---|---|---|
| EE | 16.06 | 0.0002 |
| DP | 3.81 | 0.0560 |
| PA | 0.16 | 0.6916 |

Table 3 indicates that there were significant differences between general assignment and beat reporters on emotional exhaustion. General assignment reporters had significantly higher levels of emotional exhaustion than did beat reporters.

Table 4 present the results of the analysis of covariance on the two categories of copy editors: those copy editors who only have copy editing duties and those copy editors who have both copy editing and layout and design duties.

Table 4

Copy Editors

| | F Value | Pr > F |
|---|---|---|
| EE | .25 | 0.6228 |
| DP | 3.66 | 0.0636 |
| PA | 5.77 | 0.0216 |

The results of Table 4 indicate that copy editors who have copy editing and layout and design duties have significantly lower levels of personal accomplishment than do those copy editors who have only copy editing duties.

## Discussion

A variety of variables were found to significantly relate to job burnout in journalists. These results will be further detailed and interpreted in this section.

### Size of Paper

The size of the newspaper had a significant relationship with (EE) emotional exhaustion. The subjects who worked for the larger newspapers had significantly lower emotional exhaustion scores than did those subjects who worked for the smaller papers. The higher levels of emotional exhaustion among those subjects who work for the smaller papers could be due in part to ambiguous or multiple job assignments.[16] Previous research on other professions has indicated that job role ambiguity or multiple job assignments have been associated with high levels of job burnout.[17]

In general, it would appear the larger daily newspaper had more clear-cut work assignments in regard to both reporter and copy editor positions.

**Age**

There was a significant relationship between age and both (EE) emotional exhaustion and (DP) depersonalization. The older subjects in the study demonstrated significantly lower levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization.

In previous studies of other professions age has been found to have this type of relationship with job burnout measures.[18] There are two hypotheses about this relationship. The first hypothesis is that maturation processes during the adult years provide a greater degree of coping skills in dealing with stress. Thus, older individuals tend to better handle job stress.[19]

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[16] Steven R. Banks and Edward G. Necco, "The Effects of Special Education Category and Type of Training on Job Burnout in Special Education Teachers." Teacher Education and Special Education, 18:60-74 (Summer/Fall 1990).

[17] Richard L. Schwab and Edward F. Iwanicki, "Perceived Role Conflict, Role Ambiguity, and Teacher Burnout," Educational Administration Quarterly, 18:60-74 (Winter 1982).

[18] Banks and Necco.

[19] Maslach and Jackson, 1986.

The second hypothesis is that the older subjects in these studies are the survivors in their profession. Their burned out former colleagues have quit the profession, leaving just the survivors in the older adult group.[20]

**Sex**

There was a significant relationship between sex and (PA) personal accomplishment. Males had significantly higher scores on personal accomplishment than did females. This could be due in part to the "glass wall" effect: Women see journalism as a male dominated field. They see themselves coming up against a "glass wall" in terms of advancing to managerial positions. With the perception of little chance for advancement, women may then tend to feel less personal accomplishment from their work.

**Job Title**

There were significant differences between reporters and copy editors in their levels of job burnout. Copy editors had significantly higher levels of emotional exhaustion. Both a seemingly heavier workload and the multiple role assignment of the copy editor seem to mark it as a high-risk position for job burnout.

In comparisons within the copy editing group, the copy editors who did copy editing and layout and design were significantly higher on two of the three burnout measures than those who did only copy editing. Within the reporter group, those reporters who had general assignments were significantly higher on one of the burnout subtests than were beat reporters.

The commonality found in these results is that multiple assignment duties tend to increase job burnout. If job burnout is found to be directly related to job turnover in journalism, then copy editors with multiple duties and general assignment reporters would appear to be at risk for leaving the profession.

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[20] Mary Kay Zabel and Robert H. Zabel, "Burnout Among Special Education Teachers," Teacher Education and Special Education, 6:255-259 (Fall 1983).

### Years of experience

Those subjects with more total years of experience had significantly lower levels of emotional exhaustion and higher levels of personal accomplishment than did those with fewer years of job experience.

As with the age variable, the older subjects may be the stress survivors within the journalism field. It may also be that the most stressful years within any profession are the entry years. During the first three to five years of starting a new job one must learn the technical aspects of the position as well as develop a social standing within the field. This period of "learning the ropes" may well be the single most stressful period of vocational development.

### Income

Income showed a significant inverse relationship with emotional exhaustion. Those subjects with higher incomes tended to have lower levels of emotional exhaustion. This finding has not been generally reported in previous research.

### Career items

Those subjects who indicated they intended to leave the field had significantly higher levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. This finding confirms previous research from other professions.[21]

Those subjects who expressed a high level of job satisfaction had significantly lower scores on emotional exhaustion. In addition, subjects who expressed a high level of job satisfaction had significantly lower scores on depersonalization. Those subjects who had higher levels of job satisfaction had higher levels of personal accomplishment.

[21] Maslach and Jackson, 1986.

This type of a relationship between career satisfaction and job burnout has also been previously noted in other professions.22

There was a significant relationship between emotional exhaustion and the statement: "The world of work is different from what I expected." The subjects who agreed with this statement had significantly higher levels of emotional exhaustion. In addition, there was a significant relationship between this item and depersonalization. Those subjects who agreed with this statement had higher levels of depersonalization. This may point to the need for schools of journalism and journalism programs to provide more realistic information about print journalism careers. Certainly internships could help. In addition, active student newspapers that mirror the professional world can assist in providing realistic newsroom situations.

There was a significant relationship between the question: "If I had to do it over, I would still choose career in journalism" and the variable of emotional exhaustion. Those who affirmatively indicated that they would go into journalism again had significantly lower levels of emotional exhaustion. There was also a significant relationship between this item and personal accomplishment. Those subjects who answered in the affirmative to this item had higher levels of personal accomplishment. This result relates to the career satisfaction portion of the survey. Those subjects who are satisfied with their careers also believe they are making significant contributions to the profession and therefore derive a sense of personal accomplishment.

[22] Maslach and Jackson, 1981.

## At-Risk Profile

According to the results of this study, a journalist "at-risk" for job burnout is a young, entry level journalist, working as a multiple assignment copy editor at at small paper. This "at-risk" journalist is paid a less than an average income, expresses intentions to leave the field, has found journalism to be much different from what was expected, and demonstrates a low overall level of job satisfaction.

## Implications for Managers

As has been mentioned, job stress and job burnout form a continuum from the simple "having a bad day at the office," to complete disassociation with one's job. The psychological syndrome of job burnout may well be linked to job productivity, job satisfaction and job longevity.

Managers should be aware of these possible links. Turnover in the workplace is costly to both the institution and the individual. A burned out employee may be less productive and less effective in dealing with the public and his or her co-workers.

Although journalists at a smaller daily newspaper appeared more "at-risk" for job burnout and subsequent job turnover, there may be factors that can mediate such results. Clearly, an unambiguous job description and specific job assignment may be the most important factor to lessen job burnout at small newspapers. Mentoring and follow-up contact between the journalism education program and its entry level graduates are other possibilities cited in other professions for minimizing entry level stress.

Newspaper managers can benefit by first identifying those employees who may be at high risk for job burnout based on the profile given here. Further, managers may wish to pair beginning employees with mentors who can assist new employees in their first on-the-job experiences. Mentoring is a procedure that has been used extensively in other professions to assist new employees. Mentoring may help the new employee better cope with the stress that comes from "learning the ropes" of a new job.

Newspaper managers may be able to assist employees already suffering from burnout by referring those employees to relaxation training or stress management counseling.

# PREDICTORS OF JOB SATISFACTION AMONG BLACK JOURNALISTS

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# PREDICTORS OF JOB SATISFACTION AMONG BLACK JOURNALISTS

For more than two decades, the U.S. news industry has been under pressure to employ and promote blacks, Hispanics and other ethnic minorities. During the 1960s civil rights movement, criticism of the nation's largely all-white newsrooms by black Americans, by the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights and by the Kerner Commission prompted the news media to start hiring nonwhites.[1] In 1968, for example, minorities made up 2.8 percent of the news media work force.[2] The U.S. news media was cited in the 1968 Kerner Report as "shockingly backward in seeking out, hiring, training and promoting" minority journalists.[3] Twenty years later, minorities constituted 6.3 percent or 3,402 of the 54,000 newspaper journalists in the United States.[4]

However, this 3.5 percent increase seems like a snail's pace when it is compared to the progress that the American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE) envisioned in 1978 when ASNE announced that its goal was to make the percentage of minorities in the nation's newsrooms proportionate by the year 2000 to the U.S. minority population of 22 percent.[5] Since 1978, the average annual percentage increase for minorities at newspapers has been about .03 percent.[6] At the end of 1990, minorities made up 8.7 percent or 4,900 of the 55,700 newspaper work force.[7]

Progress on the broadcast side is also less than optimistic. National studies of minorities and women for the past several years conducted by Stone in conjunction with the Radio and Television News Directors Association show progress for women but not for minorities.[8] In 1976, blacks represented 2,228 or 7.5 percent of the 29,600 broadcast work force, while in 1986 minorities made up 2,625 or 6.6 percent of the 39,835 work force.[9] Stone found that the decrease was most notably among black males.

In other words, although the number of minority journalists employed by the U.S. news media has increased over the years, the growth rate is much slower than anticipated.[10] For example, 51 percent of the nation's newsrooms still have no minorities at all.[11] Neither are figures at the top very promising. Among newsroom executives, minorities still comprise less than 2 percent.[12] To move toward more racially diverse newsrooms, the National Association of Black Journalists (NABJ), the National Association of Hispanic Journalists (NAHJ) and the ASNE have called upon news industry executives to quicken the hiring pace of minority journalists and to implement more effective retention and promotion policies.[13]

Two national profiles of U.S. journalists over the past two decades have analyzed patterns and trends among journalists, their job conditions and job satisfaction, but these studies have revealed little about black journalists beyond their percentages in the field.[14] In both the Johnstone study and in the Weaver and Wilhoit study, minority journalists samples were too small to draw clear inferences. The Johnstone study consisted of a national random sample of 1,328 journalists, in which only 27 (2%) were minorities while the Weaver and Wilhoit study consisted of a national random sample of 1,001 journalists, in which 45 (5%) were minorities. A few other studies also have profiled black journalists, but the findings in these studies are largely based on small samples that favor news workers in either one U.S. region or in one medium.[15]

Given the news industry's self-imposed goal to show a significant increase in the minority journalist work force by the year 2000 and given the fact that so far only modest minority increases in newsrooms have resulted, there is a need to analyze job conditions as well as present patterns and trends in the status of minorities in the news media. Clearly there is a need for more information about the attitudes and perceptions that black journalists hold regarding their jobs and job environments. It would be useful to know if black journalists are generally pleased or displeased with their work environments and why.

The job satisfaction level of a journalist influences his or her attitude and behavior in producing news and information. Job satisfaction is of concern to media managers because it helps determine the media's ability to recruit and retain qualified and talented journalists. Job satisfaction can be considered as an individual's attitude and disposition towards his or her job and the degree to which the job fulfills the individual's needs, expectations and desires.[16]

Empirical studies of job satisfaction most often have applied Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory. Herzberg's two-factor concept contends that intrinsic job factors contribute to job satisfaction (such as achievement, responsibility, chance for advancement) while extrinsic factors (such as company policy, supervision, salary and working conditions) contribute to job dissatisfaction.[17]

The motivation-hygiene theory has been used in examining job satisfaction among journalists. Shaver found support for Herzberg's theory in a study of job satisfaction among journalism graduates.[18] For journalism graduates, opportunity for advancement was most critical to job satisfaction, while job salary was most critical to job dissatisfaction. In Barrett's study of newspaperwomen, however, both intrinsic and extrinsic factors were imperative to overall job satisfaction.[19]

The relationship between job satisfaction and organization size has also been examined. Bergen and Weaver found that predictors of job satisfaction differ among newspaper journalists according to organization size.[20]

Job satisfaction was also examined in Johnstone's 1971 national survey of U.S. journalists as well as in Weaver and Wilhoit's 1986 replication of the Johnstone study. The Johnstone study found that white journalists expressed greater job satisfaction levels than generally found in the U.S. labor force.[21] In similar findings, the Weaver and Wilhoit study revealed that white journalists overall were pleased with their work environments, but at a level significantly lower than found a decade earlier.[22]

This study examines the extent to which job satisfaction among black journalists may be predicted by job-related attributes. The major questions addressed are these: How satisfied are black journalists with their jobs? To what extent can job satisfaction be predicted by job-related variables? Is there a relationship between job satisfaction and perceptions by black journalists of racial discrimination?

## METHOD

The data come from a questionnaire administered to black journalists at the 1988 convention of the National Association of Black Journalists (NABJ) in St. Louis. The three-page, 28-item questionnaire was composed of questions from earlier studies[23] as well as questions specifically designed for this study. In this study, "black journalist" is defined as any black person attending the NABJ convention who works in the print or broadcast journalism field, including a small number of public relations practitioners in attendance who make up 21 or 4 percent of the 422 study sample.

Black journalists who attended the NABJ conference were asked to complete and return the questionnaire. The researcher and two graduate student assistants distributed the questionnaire to black journalists at the most-frequented convention sites during the four-day conference--at the NABJ registration desk, at all NABJ luncheon and dinner meetings, and at all conference program sessions. Four hundred twenty-two questionnaires that were usable were completed and returned (500 questionnaires were distributed).

Every effort was made to include all black journalists who attended the conference in the study sample. Nevertheless, this purposive sample is limited by the fact that there may have been black journalists at the conference who did not receive a questionnaire simply because they did not visit the NABJ registration desk, did not attend NABJ luncheon and dinner meetings, or did not attend the conference program sessions.[24]

In this study, job satisfaction was measured by a respondent's self-reported response to the following question: All things considered, how satisfied are you with your present job? Responses were coded on a four-point scale: (very satisfied, fairly satisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, very dissatisfied).

Twelve questions were used as independent variables or predictors of job satisfaction[25] as follows:

(1) How often do you get positive reactions and comments on your work from the people who are above you in your organization? Responses were coded on a four-point scale: (regularly, occasionally, seldom, never).

(2) How much influence do you have in decisions on hiring and firing editorial employees? Responses were coded on a four-point scale: (a great deal, some, a little, none at all).

(3) If you have a good idea for a news story which you think is important and should be followed up, how often are you able to get the subject covered? Responses were coded on a four-point scale: (almost always, more often than not, only occasionally, don't make such proposals).

(4) How much freedom do you usually have in selecting the stories you work on? Responses were coded on a four-point scale: (almost complete freedom, a great deal, some, none at all).

(5) How good a job informing the public do you think your news organization is doing? (Responses were coded on a ten-point scale where zero means no influence and ten means great influence.)

(6) Media type (print versus broadcast media) (7) Income (8) Education

(9) Journalism degree (10) Age (11) Sex

(12) Perception of racial discrimination--two measures constituted perception of racial discrimination: (a) my advancement on my job has been hampered because I am black; and (b) whites in my media organization advance faster than blacks. (Both questions were measured on a 4-point scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree.)

## RESULTS

The respondents consisted of reporters (n = 210 or 50%), editors (n = 69 or 16%), copy editors (n = 46 or 11%), photographers (n = 21 or 5%), producers (n = 29 or 7%), news directors (n = 9 or 2%), anchors (n = 17 or 4%), public relations practitioners (n = 21 or 5%). Of the 422 black journalists surveyed, 188 or 45 percent were male and 224 or 53 percent were female. Gender was not reported by 10 or 2 percent of the respondents.

Almost three-fourths of the black journalists held college degrees (310 or 74%) and three out of every four of the degrees were in journalism (217 or 70%). Respondents had an average of 8.9 years in the journalism field (out of a range from under 1 year to 36 years). Forty percent of the black journalists earned less than $30,000 a year, 31 percent earned between $31,000 and $50,000 a year and 29 percent earned more than $50,000 a year. According to Weaver and Wilhoit, the median income for U.S. journalists in 1981 was $19,000. It is not surprising, therefore, that the salaries of the black journalists surveyed are higher than the national average given that the black journalists attending the NABJ convention are considered among the nation's "elite" journalists--essentially those who work primarily in large cities for large news organizations that tend to pay some of the nation's highest salaries.

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Table 1 about here

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How satisfied were black journalists with their jobs? Results, as shown in Table 1, indicate that the overall level of job satisfaction among the black journalists surveyed tended to be positive. The findings show that black journalists are generally more satisfied than dissatisfied with their jobs. The data show that 292 or 70 percent of the black journalists are very satisfied or fairly satisfied with their jobs in journalism, while 124 or 30 percent are somewhat dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with their jobs.

These findings overall are consistent with the positive job satisfaction levels found in Johnstone's 1971 study of white journalists and in Weaver and Wilhoit's 1986 replication of the Johnstone study. However, the present study findings show that black journalists are more moderate than white journalists in their level of satisfaction. Only 20 percent of the black journalists viewed themselves as "very satisfied" with their jobs, whereas, 49 percent of the white journalists in the Johnstone study and 40 percent in the Weaver and Wilhoit study reported "very satisfied" claims.

The data show also that job dissatisfaction is significantly higher among black journalists than among white journalists, which raises concern as to why this is the case. The present findings in comparison with the Weaver and Wilhoit study reveal that black journalists are almost twice as likely (30%) as white journalists (17%) to be dissatisfied with their jobs. Thus, while black journalists overall seem satisfied with their work environments, they are significantly less pleased than white journalists.

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Table 2 about here

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A cross tabulation of the job satisfaction variable by gender identification indicated that among black journalists, gender is not a factor of job satisfaction. As shown in Table 2, the data revealed no significant statistical differences between male and female black journalists' claims of job satisfaction. This finding supports Weaver and Wilhoit's report in 1984 that gender makes no difference in job satisfaction, but contrasts with the Johnstone study of a decade earlier that revealed higher levels of job satisfaction among women. The present finding of no difference in male and female job satisfaction may simply reflect the changing complexion of the journalism work force from a male to female majority over the past decade. By 1986, at least one out of every three journalism professionals was a woman.[26] With increased numbers of women in the field, it may be that women today are just as likely as men to express dissatisfaction.

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Table 3 about here

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To what extent can job satisfaction be predicted by job-related attributes? Stepwise regression analysis was used to test whether or not the job-related attributes could predict the job satisfaction of black journalists. As shown in Table 3, results of the data indicated a significant relationship between the independent variables and job satisfaction: $R = .45$, $R^2 = .20$, $F = 7.86$, $P < .001$. Among the independent variables, five job-related attributes appeared to make significant contributions to the relationship. The strongest predictor of black journalist job satisfaction was hiring and firing influence (Beta = .25, $P < .01$), while the second strongest predictor was how black journalists rated their news organization's performance in informing the public (Beta = .17, $P < .01$). Black journalists who hold their organization's performance in high esteem tended to express higher satisfaction levels than those who do not. The three other predictors were: education (Beta = -.11, $P < .05$), income (Beta = .10, $P < .05$), and receiving frequent positive comments from superiors (Beta = .11, $P < .05$).

All of the five variables except education showed a positive relationship with job satisfaction. Education was the only significant predicting variable that showed an inverse relationship. That is, as education goes up among the respondents, job satisfaction goes down. This finding is consistent with media research that has shown education a factor in media criticalness.[27] Studies have found that individuals who have higher education levels tend to be more critical of the media than those with lower education levels. Perhaps a similar relationship exists between education and job satisfaction.

None of the other independent variables appeared to be significant predictors of job satisfaction. That is, freedom to select stories, type of media, journalism degree, age, sex and perception of racial discrimination showed no significant relationship to job satisfaction (see Table 3). The data also revealed that money is not the top job incentive among black journalists. The findings show that having decision-making power and receiving positive comments from superiors are more important determinants of job satisfaction among black journalists than salary.

Is there a correlation between job satisfaction among the black journalists and perceptions of racial discrimination? The Kendall's Tau Beta revealed a significant correlation between job satisfaction and the respondent's perception of whether or not being black hampered job advancement (Tau B = .26, P < .0001). Job satisfaction was low among respondents who felt that being black hampered job advancement and high among those who felt that job advancement was not hampered by being black.

On the other hand, no significant association was found between job satisfaction and the respondents' perception of whether or not whites advanced faster than blacks. This finding was somewhat surprising, given the criticism and complaints from black journalists about their treatment in the newsroom. For example, black journalists have charged that they have little opportunity for job advancement, are overlooked for management positions, are pigeonholed into token positions in which they are expected to make the black community their special domain, and must work twice as hard to be considered as qualified as their Anglo colleagues.[28] But while there was no significant correlation between job satisfaction and black journalists' perception of whether whites advanced faster than blacks, what should not be ignored is the finding that feelings of racial discrimination prevail among the black journalists surveyed. Seventy-two percent of the respondents reported that they feel whites in their newsroom advance faster than blacks.

## CONCLUSIONS

The findings in this study reveal interesting patterns and trends regarding the attitudes and perceptions of the black journalists surveyed toward their jobs and work environments. However, the findings cannot be claimed to be representative of all black American journalists nor of all NABJ members. Data results indicate that the overall level of job satisfaction among the black journalists tends to be positive, though more tempered than the satisfaction levels reported in studies of white journalists. Certainly, this is good news for news media managers given charges by black journalists that the media industry shows lackluster commitment and laggardness in its recruiting, retention and promotion of journalists of color and given the continuous efforts by black, Hispanic, Asian and Native American press associations and the ASNE to create more culturally diverse newsrooms.

The findings in this study are evidence that certain job factors do motivate black journalists on the job. The strongest predictor of job satisfaction was hiring and firing power. Since such influence is held largely by news managers and since the percentages of blacks in media management is very small, the management prospects thus far for black journalists do not seem very optimistic. Among newsroom executives, minorities still comprise less than 2 percent. Studies have found that minority journalists rarely advance to management jobs because they are not in the "managerial pipeline."[29] In U.S. newsrooms, decision-making positions are still overwhelmingly held by whites. The industry needs to strongly improve its record of hiring minority journalists in management positions.

Because job satisfaction is central to the commitment journalists make to their field, the enhancement of job satisfaction should occur whenever possible. The findings in this study show that job satisfaction motivations for black journalists are not very different from those found in studies of white journalists.

The findings suggest that among black journalists, job satisfaction levels tend to be highest when a glass ceiling is not placed over black journalist advancement into management positions, when the salaries of black journalists are competitive and when black journalists receive positive reactions and positive comments from superiors. Knowing which job-related aspects are most important in overall satisfaction among black journalists could be useful to news managers who truly want to hire and retain black employees.

In fact, a retention program should be central to any media organization sincerely interested in holding on to the minorities it hires. To examine nationwide minority journalists' retention, the American Newspaper Publishers Association's Task Force on Minorities recently announced that it will conduct research to determine at what rate and for what reasons minority journalists leave the industry.[30] Building such a data base portrait is critical if the industry is concerned about the retention of minority journalists.

What also cannot be ignored is the feeling among black journalists that race works against them in job advancement. Almost one out of every four of the black journalists surveyed said whites in their newsrooms advance faster than blacks. The findings in this study suggest that news managers who clearly want to make progress in increasing and retaining minorities should emphasize both job advancement possibilities and minority representation in managerial jobs. For example, industry executives interested in developing retention and promotion program policies could elicit the help of the National Association of Minority Media Executives, a new group consisting of newspaper, magazine, radio, and television executives formed in December 1990 to work for the advancement of more minorities into the top ranks of the newsroom.

The findings in this study suggest how the climate at news media organizations can be made more conducive and attractive to blacks and other journalists of color. Because journalists who say they are satisfied with their jobs are much more likely to remain in the field than those who are less satisfied, it is imperative that news managers do not ignore the job satisfaction factors found in this study when trying to recruit and retain journalists of color.

## NOTES

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[23] David H. Weaver and G. Cleveland Wilhoit, op. cit., pp. 174-182.

[24] NABJ President Dewayne Wickham reported after the St. Louis conference that 1,300 people registered for the meeting. However, while the overwhelming majority of the conference participants were black journalists, the actual number of black journalists who registered for the conference was unknown, simply because the registration forms did not include racial designations. Therefore, it was impossible to determine what percentage of black journalists who registered for the conference is represented by the 422 respondents in this study sample. See the NABJ Newsletter (September 1988), p. 2.

[25] For questions from the Weaver and Wilhoit study, see David H. Weaver and G. Cleveland Wilhoit, op. cit., pp. 174-182.

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## TABLE 1

### Job Satisfaction Among Black Journalists: A Frequency and Percentage Comparison

| **Job Satisfaction** | **N = 416** | |
|---|---|---|
| Very satisfied | 20.7% | (86) |
| Fairly satisfied | 49.5 | (206) |
| Somewhat dissatisfied | 23.8 | (99) |
| Very dissatisfied | 6.0 | (25) |
| Total | (100%) | N = 416 |

## TABLE 2

### Job Satisfaction Among Black Journalists by Gender: A Frequency and Percentage Comparison

| Job Satisfaction | Males | | Females | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Very satisfied | 23.8% | (44) | 16.7% | (37) |
| Fairly satisfied | 49.2 | (91) | 50.2 | (111) |
| Somewhat dissatisfied | 21.6 | (40) | 26.2 | (58) |
| Very dissatisfied | 5.4 | (10) | 6.8 | (15) |
| $X^2$ = 11.6 df = 15 P > .05 | (100%) | N=185 | (100%)* | N=221 |

*Figure rounded to equal 100.

## TABLE 3

### Job Satisfaction Predictors for Black Journalists (Using Standardized Regression Coefficients)

| Job-Related Variables | Beta |
|---|---|
| How often do you get positive reactions and comments on your work from the people who are above you in your organization? | .11* |
| How much influence do you have in decisions on hiring and firing editorial employees? | .25** |
| If you have a good idea for a news story which you think important and should be followed up, how often are you able to get the subject covered? | .04 |
| How much freedom do you usually have in selecting the stories you work on? | .04 |
| How good a job informing the public do you think your news organization is doing? | .17** |
| Perception of discrimination | .05 |
| Media type (e.g., print vs. broadcast) | .08 |
| Education | -.11* |
| Journalism degree | .02 |
| Age | .08 |
| Sex | .09 |
| Income | .10* |

*P < .05 **P < .01

# THE EXPERIENCES OF FEMALE JOURNALISM GRADUATES IN THE CANADIAN LABOUR MARKET: A LONGITUDINAL ASSESSMENT

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# THE EXPERIENCES OF FEMALE JOURNALISM GRADUATES IN THE CANADIAN LABOUR MARKET: A LONGITUDINAL ASSESSMENT

## Introduction

In Canada, there are presently nine universities and nine community colleges offering bachelor's, master's, or diploma programs in journalism[1]. Women currently make up 65% of the enrollment in journalism programs at the bachelor's level, 42% of the enrollment in master's programs, and 56% of the enrollment in community college programs[2]; the percentage of women in bachelor's programs is roughly equivalent to the percentage of female journalism students at the same level in the United States, although female representation at the master's level in Canada is somewhat lower than in the United States.[3] However, despite the high percentage of women in Canada journalism programs, there is little information available on the labour market experiences of Canadian journalism graduates, or on gender-based differences in those experiences.

Women journalism graduates in Canada appear to have a slightly higher rate of full-time employment than male graduates, and also appear more likely than male graduates to be employed in a job with requirements equal to their level of education[4] . This is particularly interesting in view of a recent survey of Canadian media workers indicating that women make up approximately 21.6% of the news media work force[5], which most recently included approximately 5500 editorial employees[6]. Thus, women's representation in the work force of journalists is much lower than their rate of representation in journalism schools. Another survey showed that the average amount of formal journalism training for both male and female Canadian journalists was 1.5 years[7], with no statistically significant differences between male and female journalists in terms of age, overall education or journalism education, or amount of experience. However, women journalists were more likely to be employed in a unionized newsroom.

Additionally, little information is available on salary differences between male and female journalists in Canada. The mean annual income for all newsworkers in Canada in 1985 was $26,764; the average for print journalists was $33,009, followed by television journalists ($32,367) and radio journalists ($22,593)[8] , but no breakdown of these data by gender are available.

The purpose of this study is to explore differences in labour market experiences between male and female journalism graduates in Canada. Distinctions will be drawn between male and female students at the bachelor's, master's, and diploma (community college) levels, and a qualitative longitudinal comparison of results will also be conducted.

## Methodology

Data for the study were taken from three Statistics Canada surveys of post-secondary graduates: the 1978 National Survey of the Graduates of 1976, the 1984 National Survey of the Graduates of 1982, and the 1988 National Survey of the Graduates of 1986. The total sample for these surveys was weighted so as to represent the actual numbers of graduates in each province, from each institution, and each discipline.

Only those subjects in each survey who had graduated with a journalism major from a university or community college were included in the analysis. This selection of subjects may prejudice the results somewhat, since it excluded graduates in mass communications and broadcasting; however, it was felt that since most Canadian journalism programs tend to emphasize practical skills, this definition would capture the most students intending to work as journalists. Mass communication programs generally focus on the theoretical or policy aspects of media, and broadcasting programs, especially at community colleges, may also include training for technicians rather than journalists.

Data analysis was conducted using SPSSx, with data drawn from tapes supplied by Statistics Canada. For nominal or ordinal variables, a chi-square value for differences in distribution was calculated; for ratio variables, a one-way analysis of variance for differences in means was calculated. The appropriate chi-square ($X^2$) values and ANOVA (F-test) values are given, along with levels of significance, for those variables which showed statistically significant differences ($p<0.10$) in responses from men and from women.

## Results

### Demographic Variables

In order to give some idea of the numbers of respondents in each survey, the population of interest in each survey is detailed in Table1. Also presented are the number of students majoring in journalism during the year the survey was taken; this statistic was chosen rather than total number of graduates in the relevant year because information on enrollment is more readily available.

It is apparent from these data that women students have made up at close to half of the students in Canadian journalism programs for the past 14 years, and that journalism students are a very small percentage of graduates from Canadian universities and colleges. The number of journalism graduates included in the three surveys, however, is somewhat erratic, considering that the number of Canadian journalism programs has increased rather than decreased over the three time periods. It is possible that either the definition of "journalism" in classification criteria was altered, or that the programs themselves changed, perhaps distinguishing between print and broadcasting journalism or journalists and technicians. Caution should therefore be exercised in examining the results of further analysis when the number of subjects is small.

However, it should be noted that the distribution of subjects in each survey is roughly proportional to the distribution of journalism students in the post-secondary education population; that is, there are relatively few subjects from university journalism programs and more from college programs. Men and women are also represented in the sample in proportions close to or equal to their representation in the journalism student population. In these two aspects, the sample can be regarded as representative.

Table 1

Number of Journalism Graduates Surveyed and
Number of Journalism Students in That Year

| | 1976 (survey N= 29,609) | 1982 (survey N= 27,022) | 1986 (survey N= 31,677) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Bachelor's Men | | | |
| - surveyed | 18 | 9 | 2 |
| - total enrollment | 456 | 353 | 404 |
| Bachelor's Women | | | |
| - surveyed | 18 | 19 | 11 |
| - total enrollment | 556 | 663 | 752 |
| Master's Men | | | |
| - surveyed | 6 | 6 | 5 |
| - total enrollment | 5 | 33 | 40 |
| Master's Women | | | |
| - surveyed | 5 | 6 | 6 |
| - total enrollment | 4 | 33 | 35 |
| Diploma Men | | | |
| - surveyed | 188 | 18 | 21 |
| - total enrollment | --* | --** | -*** |
| Diploma Women | | | |
| - surveyed | 104 | 23 | 18 |
| - total enrollment | --* | --** | --*** |

Survey N=total number of graduates in all disciplines and at all levels surveyed in each year.
*Total enrollment for this year in the "other" category in "fine and applied arts" was 5,820. No further breakdowns were available.
**Total enrollment for this year in the "other" category in "fine and applied arts" was 5,591. No further breakdowns were available.
***Total enrollment for this year in "journalism" was 1,331. No further breakdowns were available.

The mean ages of students have remained relatively stable over the period covered by the survey. The only statistically significant difference was between male and female diploma students in 1976 (men, 24.88, women 24.78; $X^2$=33.659, df=17, p=0.0093). Otherwise, male and female bachelor's students ranged between 24 and 26 years of age; male and female diploma students ranged between 23 and 25 years of age; and male and female master's students ranged between 27 and 31 years of age. Notably, there were several students in their 40s and 50s in the master's population, indicating perhaps that these programs attract working journalists who wish to upgrade their educational qualifications.

The majority of students were single at all three levels of education and in all three years of the survey. The only statistically significant difference in marital status was between bachelor's men and women in 1982 (33% of men single, 73% of women single; $X^2$=5.211, df=2, p=0.0739). Otherwise, at least 60% of all male and female students were single. The number of years of full-time work experience also did not vary greatly between each survey. College men (3.10 years) and women (2.63) differed significantly in 1976 ($X^2$=15.443, df=5, p=0.0086), but otherwise the amount of work experience varied between approximately 3 and 4 years for male students and 2 and 3 years for female students.

### Labour Market Experiences

Four major topics relating to labour market experiences were explored: occupations entered after graduation, income, time spent in various labour market activities, and job and salary satisfaction. The most common industries and occupations entered after graduation are detailed in Tables 2 and 3.

TABLE 2
Industries Most Commonly Entered After Graduation
(in percentages of population)

| | 1976 | 1982 | 1986 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Bachelor's M | Publishing (16.7) | Broadcasting (28.6) | Publishing (50.0)* |
| | Broadcasting (16.7) | Printing (14.3) | Government (50.0) |
| | Film Production (16.7) | Publishing (14.3) | |
| Bachelor's W | Broadcasting (16.7) | Broadcasting (33.3) | Publishing (20.0)* |
| | Government (16.7) | Printing (11.1) | Communication (20.0)* |
| | Education (11.1) | Publishing (11.1) | Education (20.0) |
| Master's M | Education (33.3) | Publishing (33.3) | Education (40.0) |
| | Colleges (33.3) | Printing (16.7) | Publishing (40.0)* |
| | Publishing (16.7) | Advertising (16.7) | |
| Master's W | Publishing (20.0) | Broadcasting (86.7) | Publishing (33.3)* |
| | Publishing (16.7) | Government (33.3) | Universities (16.7) |
| Diploma M | Broadcasting (25.5) | Publishing (53.3) | Electronics (64.7) |
| | Telecommunications (13.3) | Sales (11.8) | |
| Diploma W | Broadcasting (22.1) | Publishing (38.1) | Electronics (33.3) |
| | Publishing (9.6) | Government (9.5) | Service (16.7) |

M=men, W=women
All industries cited by 2 or more respondents in each group are listed.
*Responses in this year were categorized by general, rather than specific, groups of industries. "Publishing" includes both publishing and printing. "Communications" includes broadcasting.

Industries entered by journalism graduates after graduation did not vary greatly by year or by educational level, with the exception of college graduates in 1986. However, this variation may be due to a change in coding rather than any trends in employment. The most popular industries for journalism graduates, not surprisingly, were broadcasting, publishing, and printing. Several students at the bachelor's and master's levels also obtained employment at educational institutions.

TABLE 3
Occupations Most Commonly Entered After Graduation
(in percentages of population)

| | 1976 | 1982 | 1986 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Bachelor's M | Writer/Editor (33.4)<br>Producer(22.2) | Writer/Editor (71.4) | Manager (50.0)<br>Artistic (50.0)* |
| Bachelor's W | Writer/Editor(27.8)<br>Producer (5.6) | Writer/Editor (55.6) | Artistic (60.0)*<br>Clerical (20.0) |
| Master's M | Teacher (33.3)<br>Publicist (16.7) | Writer/Editor (66.7) | Artistic (60.0)* |
| Master's W | Writer/Editor (40.0) | Writer/Editor (83.3) | Artistic (66.7)* |
| Diploma M | Technician (10.6)<br>Audio Engineer (5.3) | Writer/Editor (60.0) | Artistic (76.5)* |
| Diploma W | Writer/Editor (14.4)<br>Ad Artist (5.8) | Writer/Editor (33.3) | Artistic (50.0)*<br>Manager (25.0) |

M=men, W=women
All occupations cited by 2 or more respondents in each group are listed.
*Coding system changed in this survey so that only general, rather than specific, occupational groups are listed. "Artistic" includes writer/editors.

There was very little variation in occupations chosen by the journalism graduates surveyed; the overwhelming majority took jobs as writers/editors. Some community college graduates in the 1976 survey were employed as technicians, but this may be because the definition of "journalism" programs in this survey also may have included programs for broadcast technicians.

Another important factor in labour market experience is the amount of salary earned in a particular job. Respondents in each survey were asked to report what salary they would earn if they worked at their current job for 12 months. Results are presented in Table 4.

TABLE 4
Annual Income
(in each year's current dollars)

| | 1976 | 1982 | 1986 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Bachelor's Men | 12,705 | 22,142 | 41,250*** |
| Bachelor's Women | 13,294 | 19,294 | 19,111*** |
| Master's Men | 20,500* | 18,166 | 25,000 |
| Master's Women | 13,375* | 23,333 | 33,083 |
| Diploma Men | 13,174** | 13,428 | 19,375 |
| Diploma Women | 9,144** | 16,157 | 20,727 |

---

*$X^2$=6.294, df=7, p=0.0758
**$X^2$=41.976, df=20, p=0.0028
***$X^2$=11.000, df=6, p=0.0884. However, only 2 male graduates were surveyed.

Income prospects for female journalism graduates, in comparison to the salaries reported by male graduates, have improved markedly over the period of the survey, except at the bachelor's level. While women graduates earned less than men at all levels in 1976, in 1986 women were earning more than men at the master's and diploma's levels. It is possible that in a larger sample of bachelor's graduates the earnings of female and male students would be more comparable, as the two male bachelor's graduates in the 1986 survey earned exceptionally high salaries and thus inflated the income differences between men and women.

One factor affecting annual income is labour market status: employment, unemployment, or withdrawal from the labour force (defined as being without a job and not looking for one). Respondents in each survey were asked to describe their labour market status two years after graduation: that is, at the time the survey was conducted. Results are presented in Table 5.

TABLE 5
Labour Market Status Two Years After Graduation
(in percentages of population)

| | 1976 | | | 1982 | | | 1986 | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | E | UE | Other | E | UE | Other | E | UE | Other |
| Bachelor's M | 94.4 | 5.6 | 0.0 | 88.9 | 11.1 | 0.0 | 100.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Bachelor's W | 94.4 | 5.6 | 0.0 | 94.7 | 5.3 | 0.0 | 90.9 | 9.1 | 0.0 |
| Master's M | 100.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 100.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 100.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Master's W | 100.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 100.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 100.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Diploma M | 91.0 | 2.7 | 2.7 | 94.5 | 5.5 | 0.0 | 80.0 | 15.0 | 0.0 |
| Diploma W | 90.4 | 6.7 | 2.9 | 91.3 | 8.7 | 0.0 | 88.9 | 5.6 | 5.6 |

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M=men, W=women, E=employed full or part time, UE=unemployed and looking for work, Other=unemployed and not looking for work.

Employment rates for male and female graduates were not significantly different across the periods surveyed. The best employment rates were among the master's students, but were also relatively high among the diploma and bachelor's graduates. High rates of employment might be expected two years after graduation, when graduates have had time to decide on their preferred employment and undertake a job search; however, an examination of the responses to questions regarding employment status six months and one year after graduation also show no significant differences between men and women. Most graduates appear to find work very quickly after graduation. Unfortunately, the survey question used to ascertain labour market status did not distinguish between full- and part-time employment, but the relatively high salaries reported in Table 4 would suggest that most graduates obtain full-time employment.

Respondents were also asked to rate their satisfaction with their current job and current salary on a five-point scale ranging from "very satisfied" to "not at all satisfied". Means of responses from all three surveys are presented in Tables 6 and 7.

TABLE 6
Job Satisfaction
(1=very satisfied, 4=not at all satisfied)

| | 1976 | 1982 | 1986 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Bachelor's Men | 1.973 | 1.111* | 1.500 |
| Bachelor's Women | 1.733 | 1.684* | 2.000 |
| Master's Men | 2.000 | 0.833 | 1.200 |
| Master's Women | 2.600 | 1.500 | 2.000 |
| Diploma Men | 2.192 | 2.389 | 1.375 |
| Diploma Women | 2.371 | 2.000 | 1.727 |

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*F=3.4782, p=0.0735

Job and salary satisfaction did not differ significantly between male and female graduates, but women tended to rate both job and salary satisfaction lower than men. Interestingly, college men were significantly more dissatisfied with their salaries in 1982 than were college women, but this situation reversed itself by 1986. Salary satisfaction for both men and women dropped slightly between 1976 and 1986, while job satisfaction rose over the same period, indicating perhaps that, while jobs in journalism are still attractive, salaries are not keeping pace with graduates' expectations.

TABLE 7
Salary Satisfaction
(1=very satisfied, 4=not at all satisfied)

| | 1976 | 1982 | 1986 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Bachelor's Men | 1.812 | 1.667 | 1.500 |
| Bachelor's Women | 1.867 | 1.895 | 2.000 |
| Master's Men | 1.600 | 0.833 | 2.000 |
| Master's Women | 2.200 | 1.333 | 2.200 |
| Diploma Men | 1.862 | 3.111* | 2.200** |
| Diploma Women | 1.863 | 1.826* | 2.727** |

*F=4.6755, p=0.0368
**F=2.9039, p=0.1000

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The data presented are somewhat hampered by the fact that in some instances very few graduates were surveyed. However, this methodological problem is countered by the fact that in some years there were relatively few journalismstudents; thus it follows that any sample of journalism graduates in certain years will have a small pool of subjects from which to choose. Despite the problems inherent in trying to test for statistically significant differences among small populations, however, some general trends are still apparent and are worthy of comment.

The data show clearly that female graduates in journalism fare equally well, if not better, in the Canadian labour market than do male journalism graduates. This is in marked contrast to graduates of other disciplines, such as business, where salaries and labour market status differ significantly between male and female graduates[9]. Female journalism graduates currently earn salaries equal to or greater than male journalism students, and also have very low rates of unemployment. This is encouraging news for women who wish to pursue journalism as a career, and is a very strong selling point for journalism schools wishing to increase the representation of women in their student populations. However, a few cautionary observations need to be made.

Since journalism education appears to benefit job prospects for male and female students, the question arises if there are enough journalism programs in Canada.

Admittedly, journalism graduates in the labour market may be competing for jobs with graduates in such disciplines as English and mass communications, and the number of jobs available may be limited. Thus, a greater number of journalism programs may mean an oversupply of graduates and a corresponding drop in salaries and employment rates. But, as Desbarats observes, "journalism education in Canada is relatively underdeveloped compared to the United States....the total number of journalism students in Canadian universities [1500] is little more than one-quarter the enrollment of a single major school in the United States"[10]. Greater availability of journalism education can only benefit the profession and students alike.

A further problem in Canadian journalism education is the lack of any doctoral programs, meaning that students must go out of the country to pursue doctorates, and, additionally, that universities wishing to hire journalism professors must hire from other disciplines or hire from outside the country. Canadian journalism education would be enhanced by a supply of Canadian-trained doctoral graduates.

It must also be noted that attitudes toward women in Canadian journalism may not have changed greatly despite the high number of female graduates in journalism. A survey of

Canadian managing editors in 1983 indicated that twice as many male as female graduates had been hired in the previous two years[11]. This statistic is not necessarily disproven by the data presented in this study. The occupational classification of "writer/editor" and the industrial classifications of "publishing" or "printing" are sufficiently broad that they could include a number of professions related to, but not exactly, journalism - for example, public relations, advertising, or marketing. More precise data might indicate how many female journalism graduates are actually entering journalism, rather than into related professions, and if there is a difference in the number of female and male journalism graduates entering journalism or journalism-related professions.

Another issue that may affect female journalism students and graduates in the future is the relatively small number of women progressing to graduate studies. In 1986, the ratio of male graduates to undergraduates was 1 to 10; for women, it was 1 to 20. This situation is not specific to Canada; in the United States, women are a majority in the student population but a minority in the faculty at journalism schools[12], indicating that few women are progressing to graduate studies, at least at the doctoral level, in journalism.

Encouraging women to pursue master's or doctoral degrees in journalism may be difficult because journalism programs in Canada generally are oriented toward producing working journalists rather than future academics. However, women students still should be encouraged to consider graduate studies in journalism to ensure that women's concerns are addressed in journalism research, and to ensure a supply of women teachers for journalism schools.

In conclusion, the information presented in this study gives cause for cautious optimism. Gender-based differences between the labour market experiences of Canadian journalism graduates have, over time, disappeared, and women graduates appear to be on equal footing with male graduates. It is apparent, though, that a more detailed study of these graduates needs to be made. The data herein are drawn from a general survey of graduates in all disciplines, and it is entirely possible that a study specific to journalism graduates - perhaps conducted by journalism schools themselves - could further illuminate the comparative experiences of Canadian journalism school graduates. As it stands, however, the labour market picture is positive for male and female graduates alike in terms of employment and salary rates.

# FOOTNOTES

[1] *National Guide to University and College Programs*, Career Information Directorate, Occupational and Career Information Division, Canada Employment and Immigration Commission (Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services, 1988).

[2] Statistics Canada, *Universities: Enrollments and Degrees, 1987-88* (Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services, 1989); Statistics Canada, *Enrollments at Community Colleges and Related Institutions 1987-88* (Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services, 1989).

[3] Becker, Lee, "Enrollments increase in 1989, but graduation rates drop", *Journalism Educator,* 45(3), Autumn 1990.

[4] Statistics Canada, *The Class of 82: Summary Report on the Findings of the 1984 National Survey of the Graduates of 1982*. Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services,1986.

[5] Pollard, George, "Canadian Newsworkers: A Cross-Media Analysis of Professional and Personal Attributes", Canadian Journal of Communication, 11(3), 1985, p. 269-286.

[6] Desbarats, Peter, *Guide to Canadian News Media* (Toronto: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1990).

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[8] Pollard, op. cit.

[9] McQuarrie, Fiona, "A Gender-Based Longitudinal Assessment of Business School Graduates in the Canadian Labour Market". Paper presented to the Women in Management Division of the 1991 Administrative Sciences Association of Canada Conference, Niagara Falls, Ontario.

[10] Desbarats, op. cit.

[11] "The Attitudes of Canadian Managing Editors toward Journalism Education", Canadian Daily Newspaper Publishers Association (Toronto: Canadian Daily Newspaper Publishers Association, 1983).

[12] Sharp, Nancy, Judy VanSlyke Turk, Edna Einsiedel, Linda Schamber, and Sharon Hollenback, Faculty Women in Journalism and Mass Communications: Problems and Progress (Syracuse: Gannett Foundation/Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, 1985).

Media Mgt + Econ Div

# DIFFERENCES AT WORK AND AT HOME: FACTORS IN CAREER ADVANCEMENT BY MALE AND FEMALE NEWS DIRECTORS

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# DIFFERENCES AT WORK AND AT HOME: FACTORS IN CAREER ADVANCEMENT BY MALE AND FEMALE NEWS DIRECTORS

This study examines personal and professional factors in career advancement by broadcast news managers. Previous research has shown that women in broadcasting are under-represented in upper management and are less likely than men to aspire to it.[1] In fact, women's participation in top management in the media has been lower than in other industries.[2] The present research addresses factors that may contribute to women's not advancing in broadcast news management.

Studies of American corporations suggest that women are disadvantaged by sex discrimination, lack of political skills and social support.[3] But what about women in the media? For example, do female news directors, who have already achieved a certain level of success in their fields, face these same barriers? Are there inhibitors particular to the broadcasting industry?

Other research has found that women set more conservative career goals than men and have less effective strategies for achieving those goals.[4] This suggests such questions as: Is there a difference in how female and male news directors plan their careers. Do they choose the same road to the top? Are women as satisfied as men in their present management positions? Some researchers claim that women have less motivation than men to manage.[5] Stereotypes portray women as nurturing, people-oriented managers and men as traditional, task-oriented managers.[6] Is there evidence to support these stereotypes in broadcast management, and could certain attributes make women less desirable in high-level positions?

Studies of upper-level managers show that male executives are much more likely to be married with children than their female counterparts.[7] Although men in general are taking a more active role their children's care, studies show women are still the main child care providers.[8] Regardless of social change, one thing will remain constant for women -- the biological reality of child-birth. One survey of working women found that the majority think doing their jobs became more difficult when they were pregnant.[9] Labor statistics show women are 43 times more likely than men to take time off work for family reasons.[10] Does a news director's family obligations differentially affect his or her performance on the job? Are women forced to make greater personal sacrifices than men for their careers?

Finally, must it be either-or? Must women who pursue careers in broadcast management give all to their jobs or drop out for child-rearing? The Catalyst women's research group has proposed a "mommy track" to permit full-time mothers to remain in the management work force on a part-time or otherwise less committed basis until their family situations allow all-out resumption of careers. While women would normally expect little advancement on the "mommy track," they would remain productive and not have to start all over after taking time out for parenthood.[11]

The overall objective of the present study was to identify gender differences in the behavior and experiences of male and female news directors that might influence their career progress. The research questions deal with how men and women function at work with supervisors and employees and at home with family and friends. Specifically:

1) Do male and female news directors differ in their career goals, plans of achievement and optimism about their future?

2) Are the news directors of both sexes satisfied with their jobs? Do they have similar management styles and sources of stress on the job?

3) What are the news directors' perceptions about exclusion and gender discrimination at work?

4) At home, how to male and female news directors handle family obligations and do they have similar stressors?

5) Has being married affected the careers of male and female news directors? Have they made the same type of sacrifices for their careers?

6) Do news directors see a "mommy track" reduction in job commitment during child-rearing years as workable for newsroom managers?

## METHOD

The research questions about careers of men and women in broadcast news management were addressed by conducting a national telephone survey of television news directors in 1990. A sample of 52 male and 55 female television news directors was selected from the Radio-Television News Directors Association (RTNDA) membership file, the only list that consistently identifies stations' news directors. All female news directors on the RTNDA list were contacted. A comparably sized random sample of male news directors was selected from the RTNDA list.

Although not all news directors are members of RTNDA, the present sample was comparable to a 1989 survey of the population of stations in regard to staff size and market size. However, the age and salary gaps between male and female news were slightly less in this sample than in the 1989 population survey.[12]

In the first portion of the interview, news directors were asked basic demographic information. The next portion covered job responsibilities, goals, mentors, management skills, stress and discrimination. The interviewer then asked the news directors' about their personal lives and family obligations.

## RESULTS

The data were analyzed from the standpoint of male-female differences in 1) professional and 2) personal factors in their careers.

### Professional Factors

The results showed that, as professionals, the male and female news directors were alike in most respects. They clearly differed only in relation to career goals and sex discrimination.

More women than men were unsure of their five-year and long-term career goals. (Table 1) When asked about specific jobs they would like to have, men were more likely than women to want to continue in station management and eventually move into upper management. The female news directors' choices were more varied.

## Table 1: Five-Year and Long-Term Career Goals of News Directors

| | Five Year Goal | | Long Term Goal | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Male | Female | Male | Female |
| Position | | | | |
| General Manager | 42.3% | 18.2% * | 44.2% | 18.5% * |
| Same Job | 23.1 | 5.5 | 11.5 | 1.9 |
| News Director (elsewhere) | 11.5 | 20.0 | 0.0 | 3.7 |
| Reporter/Anchor | 0.0 | 14.5 | 0.0 | 5.6 |
| Producer | 0.0 | 9.1 | 0.0 | 3.7 |
| Corporate Mgt. | 1.9 | 3.6 | 5.3 | 3.7 |
| Other | 11.5 | 10.9 | 15.4 | 27.8 |
| Network | 1.9 | 0.0 | 1.9 | 1.9 |
| Unsure | 3.8 | 18.2 ** | 15.4 | 33.3 ** |
| | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% |

* Unsure vs. other variables
x2=5.2, df=1, p<.05
x2=3.9, df=1, p<.05

** General Manager vs. other variables
x2=10.9, df=2, p<.10
x2=10.2, df=2, p<.10

They were interested in becoming news directors at other stations, reporters and anchors. In the long term, about a third of the women hoped to be something other than television news. Another third of the women could not, or perhaps would not, say what they would be doing down the road.

The female and male news directors also differed in the actions they planned to take to reach their goals. Contrary to previous research suggesting that women do not understand informal means of gaining power, the majority of these women thought the best way to advance their careers was to develop professional contacts. Men, on the other hand, believed the best way was through job training. The most specific measurable answer to the question of goal-oriented plans was to improve news program ratings. This response came from about 15 percent of the men but none of the women. Men and women were equally optimistic about achieving their goals. Only one of 100 respondents, a man, expressed pessimism. (Table 2)

Men and women differed in satisfaction with their careers. Majorities of both female and male news directors were happy with their present jobs and gave similar responses when asked about what would improve their situations -- more staff and resources.

Most of the men and women said they had mentors who were helpful to their careers, realized the importance of making professional contacts and believed their networking skills to be at least adequate.

## Table 2: News Directors' Career Goal Strategies

| | Male | Female |
|---|---|---|
| "What things do you plan to do to reach your goals?" | | |
| Job Training | 41.7% | 26.9% |
| Professional Contacts | 22.9 | 42.3 * |
| Formal Education | 31.3 | 25.0 |
| Continue Hard Work | 27.1 | 28.8 |
| Improve Ratings | 14.6 | 0.0 ** |
| Unsure | 0.0 | 5.8 |
| | 37.0% | 128.8% |
| N | 52 | 55 |
| "How optimistic are you about achieving your goals?" | | |
| Very Optimistic | 59.2% | 52.9% |
| Optimistic | 38.8 | 47.1 |
| Pessimistic | 2.0 | 0.0 |
| Very Pessimistic | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| | 100.0% | 100.0% |
| N | 49 | 51 |

* x2=4.2, df=1, p<.05

** x2=8.2, df=1, p<.05

Note. Multiple responses were accepted for "Plan...to reach career goals?"

The great majority of male and female news directors said they had not experienced gender discrimination at work. (Table 3) That left 29 percent of the women and 21 percent of the men who claimed they had experienced some form of sex discrimination in their career activities. For women, the discrimination occurred on the job. For men, it happened at the hiring stage. Almost all of the women who claimed discrimination said it involved differential treatment by their boss. Some also mentioned pay discrimination. The most common type of discrimination claimed by men was reverse discrimination -- being passed over for a job because the employer needed to hire a woman.

About a third of the men and a fourth of the women said they had been unfairly excluded from meetings. (Table 3) Most of the news directors thought it was just management's style to exclude subordinates from important meetings. But the rest of the respondents had other ideas as to why they were left out. The answers differed by gender. A fourth of the women and none of the men believed they were excluded because of their sex. A third of the men but almost no women blamed their exclusion on management's negative bias against the news department.

Managerial styles were similar for female and male news directors. The evidence did not support the stereotype that women are people- or affiliation-oriented managers, in contrast to mens' being more task-oriented. Each respondent was asked about his or her strengths and weaknesses as managers. Women were just as likely as men (55% vs. 52%) to claim task-oriented

Table 3: News Directors' Perceptions of Sex Discrimination and Exclusion

| | Male | Female | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Have Encountered Discrimination on the Job | 21.2% | 29.1% | |
| N | 52 | 55 | |
| Forms of Discrimination | | | |
| Denied Job | 72.7 | 11.8 | x2=10.8, df=1, p<.01 |
| Salary | 9.1 | 47.1 | x2=4.4, df=1, p<.05 |
| Treatment | 18.2 | 58.8 | x2=4.5, df=1, p<.05 |
| Social Barrier | 0.0 | 23.5 | x2=3.1, df=1, p<.05 |
| Harassment | 0.0 | 5.9 | x2=4.4, df=1, p<.05 |
| | 100.0% | 147.1% | |
| N | 11 | 16 | |
| Have Been Excluded From Meeting | 25.0% | 30.9% | x2=.5, df=1, n.s. |
| Reasons for Exclusion | | | |
| Sex | 0.0% | 23.5% | |
| Management Style | 60.0 | 70.5 | |
| News Bias | 40.0 | 5.9 | |
| | 100.0% | 99.9% | x2=6.4, df=1, p<.01 |
| N | 10 | 17 | |

Note. Multiple Responses were accepted on "Forms of Discrimination."

skills such as budget management as strengths, and were no more likely (81% of women and 83% of men) to claim personnel management or other people-oriented skills. Women and men pointed to similar sources of stress on the job -- personnel problems (45% of women and 42% of men) and performance pressures (42% of women and 42% of men).

Men and women seemed to have similar experiences at work, but at home, greater differences emerged.

## Personal Factors

Women were less likely than men to find refuge from stress at home. Although both men and women said the lack of time was the greatest source of stress, men were almost twice as likely as women to say they had no stress once they left the office. Women were more likely than men to say family problems or household duties were stressful. (Table 4)

After working long hours as news directors,[13] women more often than men came home to a second job, running a household. Significantly more men than women were married and had spouses who did not work outside the home. For these men, child care and household chores were never a problem. Their wives did both. (Table 5) Almost all of the married women with families, on the other hand, employed day care centers, babysitters or nannies to take care of their children.

When work and family responsibilities collided, women and men had different ways of coping. (Table 5) The news directors were asked, "What would you do if your child became ill during an average work day?" More than two-thirds of the women said they

Table 4: Perceived Sources of Stress at Home for News Directors

| | Male | Female |
|---|---|---|
| Major Sources of Home Stress | | |
| Lack of Time | 32.7% | 47.3% |
| Family | 11.5 | 14.5 |
| Money | 3.8 | 9.3 |
| House | 1.9 | 9.1 |
| Guilt | 1.9 | 3.6 |
| No Stress | 50.0 | 25.5 * |
| | 101.8% | 109.3% |
| N | 52 | 55 |

* x2=6.8, df=1, p<.01

Note. Multiple responses were accepted.

Table 5: News Directors' Family and Child Care Responsibilities

| | Male | Female |
|---|---|---|
| Married | 80.8% | 61.8% |
| N | 52 | 55 |
| News Directors With Children Under 6 | 37.0% | 27.0% |
| N | 52 | 55 |
| Child Care Providers | | |
| Spouse | 62.5% | 7.1% |
| Daycare | 25.0 | 21.4 |
| Babysitter | 0.0 | 42.9 |
| Nanny | 6.3 | 21.4 |
| Family | 6.3 | 7.1 |
| | 99.6% | 100.0% |
| N | 18 | 15 |
| | (x2=14.4, df=4, p<.01) | |
| News Directors Willing to Leave Work for Emergency Child Care | 29.4% | 78.6% |
| N | 18 | 15 |
| | (x2=7.4, df=1, p<.01) | |
| News Directors Who Depend on Spouse for Emergency Child Care | 70.6% | 14.3% |
| N | 18 | 15 |
| | (x2=9.8, df=1, p<.01) | |

would leave work to take care of a sick child if needed. A third of the men said they would leave work, but most (71%) said they would not have to worry. Their wives would take care of the situation. Only two out of 15 female news directors said they could count on their husbands. Despite this willingness to leave, only half of the married women said child responsibilities had affected how they did their jobs. About 30 percent of the men said so.

Half of the men and women thought their martial status had influenced their careers. (Table 6) Of those, 80 percent of men and women who were single said it had helped their careers to remain unmarried. Of the married news directors, most of the men and women alike said that having a family limited their mobility or had other negative effects on their careers. Nearly all of the men and women believed they had made personal sacrifices for their careers -- most notably giving up time with family and friends for their jobs.

Although the conflict between job and home was greater for women, female news directors were no more likely than men to say a "mommy track" career slowdown option would work for managers in broadcast news. Only about half of the men (59%) and women (50%) saw it as workable. The other half most often said it would not work because newsroom management demands a total commitment or nothing. One female news director said, "You always have to be available. It's just the nature of the news business."

About half (46%) of the women surveyed said they would be interested in a mommy track for themselves. They thought it was

### Table 6: Personal Sacrifices and Effects of Martial Status on Careers of News Directors

| | Male | | Female | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Have Made Sacrifices for Career | 90.4% | | 80.0% | |
| N | 52 | | 55 | |
| Marital Status Has Affected Career | 48.1% | | 51.9% | |
| N | 52 | | 55 | |
| | Single | Married | Single | Married |
| How Affected | | | | |
| Positively | 80.0% | 30.0% | 81.8% | 35.3% |
| Negatively | 20.0 | 0.0 | 9.1 | 23.5 |
| Limit Mobility | 0.0 | 70.0 | 9.1 | 35.3 |
| | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% |
| N | 5 | 20 | 11 | 17 |

* x2=10.0, df=2, p<.05 (married men vs. single men)
x2= 5.9, df=2, p>.05 (married women vs. single women)

** x2= .7, df=2, p>.05 (single men vs. single women)
x2=8.0, df=3, p<.05 (married men vs. married women)

a good idea for women who want to remain in management while having families. A few of the younger women said they would like to go on a mommy track when they decide to have children. A few of the those who were not interested said they might have chosen such an option earlier in their careers.

## DISCUSSION

This study presents evidence that family obligations may negatively affect the career progress of female news directors and help explain the under-representation of women in upper broadcast management. A substantial portion of married men and women believe that marriage limits one's mobility and therefore one's opportunities or has other negative effects. Likewise, many single news directors believe forgoing marriage and a family has helped them get ahead. Almost all say they have given up time with friends and family for their careers. Indeed, research shows news directors work long hours and many believe they must be available 24 hours a day.

For women who are newsroom managers, family obligations coupled with long, unpredictable working hours at the television station may be especially difficult to reconcile. These data show that most such women must hire someone to care for their children, while most of the men have at-home wives to provide child care. Female news directors also express a greater willingness than their male counterparts to leave the office if needed for a child care emergency. Men are likely to say their wives would handle that type of situation.

Men and women alike say lack of time is their greatest problem at home, but men are almost twice as likely as women to say they have no stress once they come home from work. Do these additional stressors at home affect a female news director's job? Are these women forced to divide their loyalties between work and home? Women in this survey say no. Most believe child care responsibilities do not affect how they do their jobs. But could family obligations influence a woman's decision to enter upper management or make her career path less certain?

In this study, women were more unsure about their five-year and long-term career goals than men. They were also less likely than men to want to become general managers of television stations, but there was no direct evidence that these choices are related to family obligations.

This study found few differences in the professional lives of male and female news directors that would account for women's under-representation in upper management. The great majority of men and women alike say they are satisfied in their present jobs and are hopeful about the chance for advancement. Despite differences in career plans, men and women both have viable methods in mind for achieving their career goals.

Male and female news directors have many of the same sources of frustrations and stress on the job. They claimed similar managerial strengths and weaknesses which indicate similar managerial styles. They even have the same ideas about policies that would permit women to remain in newsroom management on a less committed basis during periods when they were fully committed to motherhood. About half of the men and women alike thought such a "mommy track" would work and the other half did not. A few men and a few women said it would be discriminatory.

Sex discrimination in the broadcast news work force may be subsiding. Fewer than a third of the female news directors in this study said they had encountered sex discrimination on the job, an incidence that's low compared to earlier research.[14]

While this study suggests that personal factors contribute more than professional ones to the slower advancement of women into upper management, questions remain. How does upper management perceive men and women with families? Are family obligations more acceptable for one gender than for the other? Do TV stations typically have policies that accommodate workers with families? As the number of single parent families increases, are there enough men and women who are willing and able to work the long hours that many stations require? As the demographics of the work force continue to change, such questions will become increasingly important.

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# Teaching Freedom of Speech in the Large Lecture Classroom

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# ABSTRACT

A large lecture course with more than 250 students isn't a conducive climate for discussing complicated issues concerning freedom of expression or a free market economy. However, these concepts are very important concepts for students in an introductory course.

A solution is called "Donahue in the Classroom". By using a combination of role-playing and talk show techniques, many of the inherent problems of large lecture courses can be overcome.

Students have reacted very positively to this teaching format. Students are interested, are enthusiastic with questions and comments, and have shown a strong, statistically significant, preference for this teaching method over the traditional lecture when surveyed.

**Teaching Freedom of Speech in the Large Lecture Classroom**
When it comes to selecting a conducive climate for discussing multifaceted issues, such as complicated issues concerning freedom of speech, freedom of expression or a free market economy, most faculty members would probably not choose a large lecture course with more than 250 students that is located in a large theater/auditorium.

However, for an introductory course in advertising, introducing the concepts of a free market economy and the need for free flow of consumer information through advertising, is a very important concept for students. For many students this course may be their only college level course in advertising so it is important to introduce these issues in this course.

The problem, then, lies in how to effectively teach and discuss the concepts of freedom of speech in a large lecture class that inhibits discussion.

A solution is what this author calls "Donahue in the Classroom". By using a combination of role-playing, talk show techniques and some enthusiasm, many of the inherent problems of discussing complex issues in a large lecture can be overcome.

Students have reacted very positively to this teaching format. Students are interested, are enthusiastic with questions and comments, and have shown a strong, statistically significant, preference for this type of exercise over the traditional lecture when surveyed. The method described was used in teaching advertising, but it would be very adaptable to almost any course.

## Defining The Problem

There are a number of factors that inhibit discussion of issues in a large lecture teaching environment. An Instructional Development Program at Pennsylvania State University focused on five particular areas that make teaching and discussion in a large lecture format particularly challenging (Gleason, 1986). First, the space is large. Research by Hall (1966) documents the distances at which people interact in our culture. The upper limits of comfortable social distance is 12 feet. Separations of up to 25 feet are reserved for "public" communications and are not conducive to interpersonal interactions or discussion. Plus, the large lecture configuration with seats in tightly packed rows make it difficult, if not impossible, to discuss with students other than those sitting immediately to the right or left. It is almost impossible to break into small discussion groups.

Second, the large space is filled with students and peers--mostly strangers. There is an impersonal atmosphere toward classmates and the instructor, plus a real reluctance by college students to speak up in front of so many people for fear of saying something "foolish".

Third, the sheer volume of students makes individual participation unwieldy. Encouraging lots of questions, comments and discussion on a daily basis could quickly consume all class time. On the other hand, by discouraging all class participation the learning environment lacks involvement and a sense of interaction.

Fourth, instructors in large lectures tend to be "remote"--inaccessible and removed authority figures at the front of the class.

Finally, the seating arrangement emphasizes the student's position as a spectator, resulting in a passive audience that expects to be entertained and interested by the performer.

This teaching format also helps to move students away from simple memorization of facts and information, and moves them to higher order thinking skills. Educational psychologist B.S. Bloom identified six possible levels of learning (Bloom, 1956), see Table 1.

(Insert Table One About Here)

Large lecture classes seldom get students beyond level one or perhaps level two. Students simply are given the information and are asked to recall it on an objective exam. This is a very low level of learning. In the the method described, students are required to use much higher level thinking skills, to weigh and analyze information, and to formulate arguments to other student positions. This should help students remember the information they discovered for their presentation when compared to rsponding to test questions.

## "Donahue in the Classroom"

"Donahue in the Classroom" takes controversial subjects and gives students the chance to role play parts in a talk show format.

The main reason this approach works is that it alleviates many of the weaknesses of the large lecture arena and can even turn them into strengths. Toward the beginning of the semester, students are told about an opportunity to earn extra credit points by participating in one of five groups. Within each group there are 5 to 6 speakers, each role playing the part of a participant in a current and/or controversial topic such as might be found on the popular "Donahue Show" or other talk show. Most of these topics deal with freedom of speech or expression issues. As an example, one group topic was "All Tobacco and Alcohol Advertising Should Be Banned". Speaker roles were:

**Community Activist.** Opposes the heavy advertising and distribution of free cigarette samples in inner city neighborhoods where poverty and lack of opportunity lead the youth and adults to abuse these products at a much higher rate than average. Wants billboards and ads banned in the neighborhood.

**President of Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD).** Opposes advertising of alcoholic beverages because most show people in bars and at parties drinking. What they don't show is these inebriated people having to drive home. Cites accident statistics.

**Researcher supported by the American Lung Association.** Talks about the risks of smoking and outlines how tobacco has been singled out for an advertising ban because it is the only product that causes death when used as intended. Cites figures on smoking--especially by young people.

**Marketing Director of Anheuser-Busch.** Talks about the company's right to advertise its product like any other business. Tries to convince the audience that it advertises responsibly (know when to say when) and advertises only to adults who are free to make their own decisions.

**Corporate Representative for R. J. Reynolds.** Similar to above, but on the smoking issue and the right of adults to smoke. Points out most ads simply try to get current smokers to switch brands.

**American Civil Liberties Union Representative.** Talks about First Amendment rights of free speech and the right of marketers of legal products to advertise their goods. Hints that if these

> products are censored, what products will be next? Who has the right to decide? The decision should be left to the free market and let people decide for themselves.

Each participant is introduced by the instructor much like a talk show host would, including a sentence or two of background about the person's position. Each participant is asked to limit the information to about 5 minutes. In a 50-minute class period, the speakers and introductions take about 35 minutes or so. The "audience" is encouraged to participate by asking questions or by the host asking for a show of hands or audience applause as to how many people agree or disagree with a speaker. The whole process is very unlecture like.

Generally, there are MANY more students who want to comment or ask questions of the participants than there is time for. However, if there is a lull, the host should have a couple of targeted questions in mind that will pit one role-playing character against another, much like the real talk show. Most of the time, though, students in the audience ask good questions or take on speakers they disagree with. Plus, many times just looking at the audience members, the instructor can see by the look on the student's face if he or she wants to say something.

The first time this was tried, the instructor expected perhaps 20 to 30 students who would be willing to get up in front of over 250 peers and role play a part. Well over 1/3 of the class--about 80-90 students volunteered. This caused a bit of anxiety for the instructor, who did not want to turn students away if they were interested in looking at an issue in depth. As a compromise, every student who wanted to was allowed to be in a group.

Speakers received the full extra credit and other group members who were assigned research roles and helped find examples, tape commercials, etc. received half the points. Many students preferred the research role. All groups met on their own time, outside of class to prepare and were responsible for scheduling all meetings--the instructor is not involved.

The first four groups were structured as described above, the fifth group was slightly different. Since our university has students from around the world, foreign students were given the opportunity to present ads from their country and culture, and show how they differed from advertising in our culture. Students were able to see how much more restrictive other cultures are in freedom of expression, compared to the United States. The students from Moslem countries in particular showed how there is an almost total restriction on using female models or showing any part of the female body uncovered. Another student from Hong Kong talked about how she and others in her country feared a loss of free market and free expression once Hong Kong comes under communist control. Students made overheads of typical ads from magazines and most had friends or relatives tape actual commercials for the class to see. The foreign students were able to present a counterpoint to the freedom of expression found in the United States.

Other topics and roles that have been used or easily could be used:

- The use of sex and sexual stereotyping in advertising.
  This topic looked at issues such as how these stereotypes affect women psychologically, whether there should be industry guidelines to reduce the problems, whether ads should be banned or censored for using nudity, as well as defenders of the right to use whatever it takes to sell the product and whether the marketplace should be the final judge by deciding what to buy.
- Political Advertising

Explores issues such as do 30 second spots lead to image campaigns and not real issues--should broadcast ads be banned? Looks at financing of the campaigns and the impact banning political ads would have on local media that need the dollars. (Applicable primarily in election years).

- Subliminal Advertising
  (The students requested this one because they were interested in it.) Is it used? Should it be allowed under guidelines for freedom of expression (e.g. if the advertiser wants naked ladies or sharks in the ice cubes, shouldn't (s)he be allowed to).
- Children's Advertising
  Should it be allowed? At what ages? Explores programs like Channel One in the elementary schools. Since young children have difficulty distinguishing fantasy from reality, should there be more limits on what can be said. At what age should advertising be allowed? Who decides what is children's programming and what is adult programming (and children's or adult products)? Does this violate the First Amendment? What implications does it have for a free market economy?

## How Do Students React?

To test the effectiveness of the approach, students were asked to evaluate the course and the teaching methods toward the end of the semester.

### Methodology

To assess the effectiveness, a two-page questionnaire was administered to determine how students felt about large lecture classes in general and particularly the effectiveness of a number of different teaching techniques, including the group presentations on freedom of expression issues. Students were given the questionnaire upon arrival in class and were given approximately ten minutes to fill it out. As mandated by the university human subject policy, students were given the opportunity to not participate and were instructed that all results were strictly anonymous and would in no way affect their grades. A total of 131 surveys were returned with 22 not completed or containing only demographic information.

For attitude questions and rankings, a seven-point Likert scale was used. Since it has been observed in past research that many respondents are less likely to select the very highest and lowest option, a seven point scale was used to allow room for differentiation. The scale for activities, presentations and attitudes was:

| Rank | Activity Ranking | Attitude Ranking |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Liked very much | Strongly agree |
| 2 | Liked | Agree |
| 3 | Liked somewhat | Somewhat agree |
| 4 | Neutral | Neither agree nor disagree |
| 5 | Disliked somewhat | Somewhat disagree |
| 6 | Disliked | Disagree |
| 7 | Disliked strongly | Strongly disagree |
| 8 | Missed activity or no answer | |

Students ranked how well they liked the overall concept of the group presentations, as well as each of the individual group presentations. One group, the international students, had not yet presented when the survey was conducted, so this group is not included in the report.

Students were also asked a number of questions about large lecture classes in general before being specifically asked about the group presentations and free speech topics.

## Results

Students overwhelmingly replied that they enjoyed discussing issues and current events in class: 17.5 percent strongly agreed, 37.9 percent agreed and 18.4 percent agreed somewhat, for 73.8 percent enjoying class discussion to some degree. Another 12.6 were neutral on the issue with less than 14 percent not wanting discussion in class.

A second question, designed to reinforce the question on discussion, asked if students enjoyed hearing other student's viewpoints and ideas. Again, there was strong positive response: 20.4 percent strongly agreed, 35.9 percent agreed and 24.3 percent agreed somewhat, for a total of 80.6 percent enjoying hearing the views of their fellow students. Another 13.6 percent were neutral with less than 6 percent disagreeing at some level.

When students were asked if they liked the role playing/group presentations on freedom of expression issues in general, only 7.8 percent of the students did not like the groups. Of the remaining, 20.4 percent liked very much, 40.8 percent liked, 25.2 percent liked somewhat, 2.9 percent were neutral and 1.9 percent marked no comment. On the qualitative comments, 2 students who did not like the presentations felt the research and information was not in-depth enough for the amount of extra credit points earned. One respondent felt the idea was good, but needed more control by the instructor.

The rankings for individual groups were slightly less favorable. The group the students liked the best was the issue of too much sex in advertising and should it be controlled. Here, 21.4 percent liked very much, 42.7 percent liked, 21.4 percent liked somewhat, 8.7 percent were neutral while 2.9 percent disliked somewhat, 1.9 percent disliked strongly and 1.9 percent marked no comment.

Next came the issue of subliminal advertising and whether its use should be allowed. Here, 33.0 percent liked very much, 34.0 percent liked, 15.5 percent liked somewhat, 8.7 percent were neutral while 2.9 percent disliked somewhat, 2.9 percent disliked strongly and 2.9 percent marked no comment.

Third was the issue of political advertising, including the issue of whether political advertising should be restricted from broadcast media. Here, 10.7 percent liked very much, 35.9 percent liked, 25.2 percent liked somewhat, 10.7 percent were neutral, while 6.8 percent disliked somewhat, 1.9 percent disliked, and 4.9 percent disliked strongly and 3.9 percent marked no comment or missed the presentation.

The final issue was whether alcohol and tobacco advertising should be banned. Here, 14.6 percent liked very much, 27.2 percent liked, 25.2 percent liked somewhat, 8.7 percent were neutral while 11.7 percent disliked somewhat, 4.9 percent disliked, and 3.9 percent disliked strongly and 3.9 percent marked no comment or missed the presentation.

A Chi-square goodness of fit shows statistically an extremely small chance that these results would have happened purely by chance. All four presentations and all groups together proved significant as Table Two shows.

(Insert Table 2 here)

An analysis of variance showed that there was no significant difference as to how well students liked the group presentations based on gender, year in school, major or grade point average.

One limitation of the study should be noted. The study design, using only treatment and post test, does not indicate that this is a superior teaching method for retention of material, only that students enjoy the format and respond enthusiastically.

**Benefits of "Donahue In The Classroom"**

The first and major benefit is the benefit to the students who find this format fun, exciting and interesting. As shown, students strongly approve of the teaching method.

Second, students see that there are many free speech, right to expression and first amendment issues involved in the world of advertising. These are not issues with right or wrong answers, but are issues that must be weighed as to whether the society as a whole will be hurt or will benefit from restriction of free expression and free markets. By having students take on roles of real-life people, it helps create a sense of reality that would be lost if the professor just discussed each side's issues.

In addition to the student benefits, this approach solves many of the other problems inherent in the large classroom as outlined earlier. The instructor breaks down the distance barrier by being out in the "audience" with the students, wandering around the aisles and fielding questions with the microphone. This also helps the instructor seem less "remote" and "authoritarian" as he or she becomes part of the audience. It also puts the instructor in a much more fun and relaxed mode to play the role of talk show host.

The impersonal atmosphere of the large lecture is reduced in several ways. First, students meet with 10-15 other class members outside of class to prepare. Plus, students are being asked to respond and to participate in class. When students stand to ask a question, the host asks for their name and major so there is some feeling of knowing other class members. It also gives students two chances for individual participation, as a group member or as a member of the audience asking questions.

Finally, this approach takes the biggest drawback, the configuration of theater-type seating, and makes it work as a normal setting for a talk show. Although mass group discussions are still not possible, many students are observed nodding or shaking their heads and then commenting to their neighbor about a point.

## Conclusions

This method of teaching freedom of speech, freedom of expression and free market concepts appears to be be successful for the large lecture format. Although students preferred some presentation subjects over others, all proved to be significant in approval, as was the approval of the basic method of role playing and group presentations.

Students at all grade levels, independent of gender, grade point, major, or anticipated grade in the course showed no significant variance in their approval of this method of teaching.

Some variances in the results between groups may be explained by the quality of the presentations. The ranking of the student assessments corresponds to the instructor's grading of the presentations. The lowest ranked group (tobacco and alcohol ads should be banned) made statements about use of these products in inner city areas that some students found objectionable. In spite of further questioning by the instructor and students about the comments, some students may have used this as a basis for ranking this group low.

Also, as students traditionally show a low interest in politics (as evidenced by a very low voting record) this presentation would most likely be eliminated except in an election year such as this one.

Overall, students indicate that at all grade levels and independent of other variables, students want to discuss issues in even large lecture classes. The method presented appears to meet theoretical education needs, and gains wide acceptance from students to present complicated issues such as freedom of speech, freedom of expression and free market principles in a large lecture format.

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Table One

BLOOM'S TAXONOMY

| Level | Learning Objective | Description of Learning |
|---|---|---|
| One | Basic Knowledge | Student recalls or recognizes information. |
| Two | Comprehension | Student changes information to a different symbolic form. |
| Three | Application | Student discovers relationships generalizations and skills. |
| Four | Analysis | Student solves problems through conscious knowledge of the relationships between components and the principle that organizes the system. |
| Five | Objective Synthesis | Student goes beyond what is known and provides new insights. |
| Six | Objective Evaluation | Student develops the ability to create standards of judgement, to weigh and to analyze. |

## Table Two

Chi Square distribution of group ranking results

| Group | Degrees of Freedom | Chi Square | Sig. (p<.05) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Overall Groups | 6 | 101.168 | 0.0000 |
| Sex in Adv. | 6 | 103.745 | 0.0000 |
| Subliminal | 6 | 91.520 | 0.0000 |
| Political Adv. | 6 | 68.222 | 0.0000 |
| Alcohol/Tobacco | 6 | 38.949 | 0.0000 |

n=109

# Overcoming the Drawbacks of the Large Lecture Classroom

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Association of Educators in Journalism and Mass Communication
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# ABSTRACT

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## Overcoming the Drawbacks of the Large Lecture Classroom

There are many of aspects large lectures that inhibit the teaching process. Some problems associated with the large lecture include:

- Lack of student participation
- Students feeling isolated from the instructor and other students
- Passive learning, with little opportunity for writing, speaking, or critical thinking
- Little student feedback
- Inherent problems with evaluation

This author has developed a number of tactics to help solve these problems and create a more participatory, lively learning environment. Techniques include using role playing to explore controversial issues in "Donahue in the Classroom", using a trivia game to introduce materials and topics and ways to incorporate writing and critical thinking into the large lecture. The paper also gives tips on handling evaluation and grading in the large lecture environment.

A survey of students shows overwhelming approval of the methods.

**Overcoming the Drawbacks of the Large Lecture Classroom**

There are a number of aspects that inhibit the teaching process in a large lecture teaching environment. An Instructional Development Program at Pennsylvania State University focused on five particular areas that make teaching and discussion in a large lecture format particularly challenging (Gleason, 1986). First, the space is large. Research by Hall (1966) documents the distances at which people interact in our culture. The upper limits of comfortable social distance is 12 feet. Separations of up to 25 feet are reserved for "public" communications and are not conducive to interpersonal interactions or discussion. Plus, the large lecture configuration with seats in tightly packed rows make it difficult, if not impossible, to discuss with students other than those on one side or the other. It is almost impossible to break into small discussion groups.

Second, the large space is filled with students and peers--mostly strangers. There is an impersonal atmosphere toward classmates and the instructor, plus a real reluctance by college students to speak up in front of so many people for fear of saying something "foolish".

Third, the sheer volume of students makes individual participation unwieldy. Encouraging lots of questions, comments and discussion on a daily basis could quickly consume all class time. On the other hand, by discouraging all class participation the learning environment lacks involvement and a sense of interaction.

Fourth, instructors in large lectures tend to be "remote"--an inaccessible and removed authority figure at the front of the class.

Finally, the seating arrangement emphasizes the student position as a spectator resulting in a passive audience that expects to be entertained and interested by the performer. These five drawbacks of the large lecture all point to a lack of involvement and a feeling of "remoteness" in the large lecture classroom.

In addition, other studies point out even more special problems associated with the large lecture. Tests tend to be a problem. While "writing across the curriculum" is a worthy goal, correcting 250 essay exams is difficult. Groups this large, especially with very limited teaching assistant help, almost require objective tests. Writing and designing enough test questions to stay ahead of student test files is always a challenge and there is always the problem of how to deal with students that miss required examinations (Buchanan and Rogers).

Finally, there is a greater call for "involvement in learning". The National Institute of Education convened a study group on the Conditions of Excellence in American Higher Education. The group recommended that faculty "make greater use of of active modes of teaching and require that students take greater responsibility for their learning." It specifically recommended small discussion groups for large classes and for in-class presentations and debates. "Students must hone their skills in writing and speaking, to extend their abilities in critical thinking and analysis. Students are more apt to learn content if they are engaged with it," the group concluded.

In general, the greatest problems associated with the large lecture are

- Lack of participation by the students
- Students feeling isolated from the instructor and other students
- Passive learning, with little opportunity for writing or speaking

to develop critical thinking abilities
- Little student feedback
- Inherent problems with evaluation

This author has developed a number of tactics to help solve these problems and create a more participatory, lively learning environment. A survey of students in the class show overwhelming approval of the methods.

**Moving Out**

First, it is essential for the instructor to get out from behind the podium to break down that artificial barrier. To get the students to feel like they know the instructor, it is important to get past that "public communication distance" and into a closer interpersonal distance. This instructor moves out and up the aisle toward the students. Since this particular lecture hall is divided into 3 sections, the lecturer can approach and make eye contact with about one-third of the class while talking. When the next topic comes up, the lecturer moves to the next section to interact with those students. Research by Gibb (1961) indicate that this type of behavior helps students feel that their presence is noted and does matter, and that this encourages participation and a feeling of involvement.

**"Donahue in the Classroom"**

This role-playing teaching activity helps overcome a number of the problems associated with the large lecture. The main reason this approach works is that it alleviates many of the weaknesses of the large lecture arena and can even turn them into strengths.

Toward the beginning of the semester, students are told about this opportunity to earn extra credit points by participating in one of five groups. Within each group there are 5 to 6 speakers, each role playing the part of a participant in a current or controversial topic such as might be found on the popular "Donahue Show" or other talk show. These topics deal with controversial issues related to the advertising field. As an example, one group topic was "All Tobacco and Alcohol Advertising Should Be Banned". Speaker roles were:

**Community Activist.** Opposes the heavy advertising and distribution of free cigarette samples in inner city neighborhoods where poverty and lack of opportunity lead the youth and adults to abuse these products at a much higher rate than average. Wants billboards and ads banned in the neighborhood.

**President of Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD).** Opposes advertising of alcoholic beverages because most show people in bars and at parties drinking. What they don't show is these inebriated people having to drive home. Cites accident statistics.

**Researcher supported by the American Lung Association.** Talks about the risks of smoking and outlines how tobacco has been singled out for an advertising ban because it is the only product that causes death when used as intended. Cites figures on smoking--especially by young people.

**Marketing Director of Anheuser-Busch.** Talks about their right to advertise their product like any other business. Tries to convince audience they advertise responsibly (know when to say when) and advertise only to adults who are free to make their own decisions.

**Corporate Representative for R. J. Reynolds.** Similar to above, but on the smoking issue and the right of adults to smoke. Points out most ads simply try to get current smokers to switch brands.

**American Civil Liberty Union Representative.** Talks about First Amendment rights of free speech and the right of marketers of legal products to advertise their goods. Hints that if these products are censored, what products will be next? Who has the right to decide? The decision should be left to the free market and let people decide for themselves.

Each participant is introduced by the instructor much like a talk show host would--including a sentence or two of background about the person's position. Each participant is asked to limit the information to about 5 minutes. In a 50 minute class period, the speakers and introductions take about 35 to 40 minutes. The "audience" is encouraged to participate by asking questions or by the host asking for a show of hands or audience applause as to how many people agree or disagree with a speaker. The whole process is very un-lecture like.

Generally, there are MANY more students who want to comment or ask questions of the participants than there is time for. However, if there is a lull, the host should have a couple of targeted questions in mind that will pit one role-playing character against another, much like the real talk show. Most of the time, though, students in the audience do this. Plus, many times just looking at the audience members, the instructor can see by the look on the student's face if he or she wants to say something.

The first time this was tried, the instructor expected perhaps 20 to 30 students who would be willing to get up in front of over 250 peers and role play a part. Well over 1/3 of the class--about 80-90 students volunteered.
This caused a bit of anxiety for the instructor, who did not want to turn students away if they were interested in looking at an issue in depth. As a compromise, every student who wanted to was allowed to be in a group. Speakers received the full extra credit amount and other group members who were assigned research roles and helped find examples, tape commercial, etc. received half the points. Many students preferred the research role. All groups met on their own time, outside of class to prepare and were responsible for scheduling all meetings--the instructor is not involved, except to review material to make sure groups were ready.
Other topics and roles that have been used or easily could be used:

- The use of sex and sexual stereotyping in advertising.
  This topic looked at issues such as how these stereotypes affect women psychologically, whether there should be industry guidelines to reduce the problems, should ads be banned or censored for using nudity, as well as defenders of the right to use whatever it takes to sell the product and let the marketplace decide whether to buy.
- Political Advertising
  Explores issues like 30 second spots lead to image campaigns and not real issues--should broadcast ads be banned? Looks at financing of the campaigns and the impact banning political ads would have on local media that need the dollars. (Applicable primarily in election years).
- Subliminal Advertising
  (The students requested this one because they were interested in it.) Is it used? Should it be allowed under guidelines for freedom of

expression (i.e. if the advertiser wants naked ladies or sharks in the ice cubes, shouldn't (s)he be allowed to).

- Children's Advertising

  Should it be allowed? At what ages? Explores programs like Channel One in the elementary schools. Since young children have difficulty distinguishing fantasy from reality, should there be more limits on what can be said. Does this violate the First Amendment?

  - International Advertising. The instructor allowed international students to talk about advertising in their country and culture and how it is like different from advertising in the United States. Students are especially interested in the Moslem culture where very few females models are used.

This approach solves many of the problems inherent in the large classroom as outlined earlier. The instructor breaks down the distance barrier by being out in the "audience" with the students, wandering around the aisles and fielding questions with the microphone. This also helps the instructor seem less "remote" and "authoritarian" as he or she becomes part of the audience. It also puts the instructor in a much more fun and relaxed mode to play the role of talk show host.

The impersonal atmosphere of the large lecture is reduced in several ways. First, students meet with 10-15 other class members outside of class to prepare. Plus, students are being asked to respond and to participate in class. When students stand to ask a question, the host asks for their name and major so there is some feeling of knowing other class members. It also gives students two chances for individual participation as a group member or as a member of the audience asking questions.

Finally, this approach takes the biggest drawback, the configuration of theater type seating and makes it work as a normal setting for a talk show. Although mass group discussions are still not possible, many students are observed nodding or shaking their heads and then commenting to their neighbor about a point. Overall, "Donahue In The Classroom" helps overcome some of the inherent problems facing the instructor in a large lecture class.

## Making Teaching Trivial

This next method is one that students seem to enjoy very much. Occasionally, when a lecture is a bit short, it is time to play Trivi-Ad. Trivi-Ad is loosely based on the National Public Radio show "What do ya' know" or Trivial Pursuit. Students can earn a couple of extra credit points for volunteering to play (and be humiliated if they don't know the answers). Usually two or three students are selected and they can work together to come up with the answers. Many times other students help them along with claps, groans or suggested answers yelled out.

The game has four categories and students must get three right to "win" their extra credit points. The categories are:

- Things You SHOULD have learned from the book
- Media
- Current Events
- Odds and Ends and Ads

Book questions come from the test bank and give students an idea of test questions (sometimes these are used on the test). Other questions come from a variety of sources such as Guiness Book of World Records, the game Adverteasing, Simmons or MRI, and especially from Ad Week, Ad Age and other industry magazines. For guidelines and sample questions, see Appendix 1.

Again, this activity overcomes a few of the problems found in the large lecture. First, students enjoy it. It's a welcome break from lecturing. Plus, they get to know a few of the students in the class and the instructor, wandering the aisles, gets out into the class and breaks down that "behind the podium" barrier.

Perhaps the most important though, is the fact that the game provides a springboard to learning. Always, the questions are related to the topics that are being covered or are being introduced. The game gets the students interest and makes them receptive to the information or the question reinforces a major point covered in the text or in class.

Finally, since many of the questions are current event oriented, it helps bring current material into the classroom (like who the largest advertiser was for the year) and helps students relate the theory of the book to current problems in advertising. Plus, the instructor always tries to bring along the periodical or source book if it is something new to the students. It's a fun way to introduce magazines that the students should be reading and also resource books like Simmons, MRI, Standard Rate and Data, The Red Book, etc.

**The Three Minute Thesis**

As mentioned in the first part of the paper, one of the national calls for improvement is for more writing, discussion and critical thinking skills in the classroom. A worthy goal, but difficult with 250 students. The Three Minute Thesis is one solution.

After talking about an issue or seeing a videotape, students are asked to get out a piece of paper and write down their reactions--in about three minutes. As an example, after seeing a video on advertising to children and the new Channel One program in the schools, students were asked to write about whether they felt it was right to bring the advertising into the classroom and force students to sit through it in exchange for the free equipment and the benefits of the current events programming. The instructor sets the stage, puts the question on the overhead and tells the student not to write a book, but to think through the issue and write down one or two well thought out reasons supporting one side of the issue. After three minutes are up, the instructor asks for a show of hands of people needing more time (generally over half the class wants more time to write) and another minute may be added on. Then, the instructor asks who took one side or the other, notes a few people, and then circulates the auditorium to have students support their side of the issue.

This technique overcomes some major problems. First, it makes the student an active participant rather than a passive learner. Even shy students who don't like to speak up are able to participate, because they have their answer written down right in front of them--they are not "put on the spot". Students have to think about the issue (pro and con) to take a side and they have to write. Plus, once again, a number of students get introduced and the instructor is circulating with the students to help break down anonymity barriers.

These papers are not graded although students get 2 extra credit "participation points" (more of this later) for turning in a paper. A teaching assistant glances at the papers when marking the credit to make sure it isn't just nonsense words. The instructor will usually look through randomly and pick a few well worded papers to share with the class. This is a very effective way to help discussion and incorporate at least a small amount of writing in the large lecture classroom.

## Evaluation Headaches

One of the biggest problems in the large lecture is exams. With hundreds of students, someones grandmother is bound to die or a dozen students will be on their deathbeds the day of the exam. Plus, with student test files a continuing problem, the instructor must always come up with new material for the tests. A few testing techniques can help solve these problems.

First, missed exams. This instructor gives five exams during the semester. The first four are concept exams that look at a particular section of the course--usually covering 4 to six chapters of related material. The final exam is comprehensive. Students must take four of the five exams. Most choose the first four, however, if they must miss an exam for any reason (yes, including the fact that they are the star of the diving team) they may choose to do so. The only requirement is that they take four of the five exams. If a student does poorly on one of the first four, (s)he can choose to take the final exam to replace one previous test and possibly improve the grade.

This technique has a number of benefits. First, the instructor gets no late night phone calls from students wanting to miss the exam--they know the answer. The burden of responsibility is on the student and the instructor does not have to play the part of the "heavy". Having to write and deal with administering make up exams is eliminated.

For students, it removes a bit of the test anxiety. They know if they do poorly on a test that they may be able to make it up on the optional final. Students are told before the final exam what their final grade will be so they make a judgement on what will be required to improve their grade on the final. This requires the instructor to figure final scores two times--before the final exam and after for those students taking the final. However, this takes less than an hour and is much easier than creating and administering make-up exams.

A second evaluation problem deals with course attendance. Once again, this instructor places the burden of responsibility on the student. Attendance is is not required. Some students can learn the material effectively by just reading, while others need the reinforcement of the lectures, supplemental material and additional examples given in class. However, attendance is strongly encouraged as at least one third of the exam questions come from lecture material (if you have a teaching assistant, have them formulate at least one or two questions during each lecture--it saves time when developing tests).

Another method to encourage attendance and discussion is to award "participation points" for in class activities. Generally, 2 points are awarded when in-class activities are completed. This includes playing Trivi-Ad, writing Three Minute Theses, doing TV Storyboards, etc. This method rewards those students in class and participating. These are not viewed as extra credit points, but are figured along with test scores into the final grade. Most are not announced so students need to attend to get the points (this is made clear on the first day and in the syllabus). Since these activities are not evaluated critically by the instructor, only a small portion of the grade is affected by these activities. Generally, there are about 10 to 12 points possible compared to 240 test points. However, it does reward the borderline student for attending and participating.

Finally, the issue of creating enough test questions to stay ahead of the student test files. One solution is to let the students help. In this class, students can submit up to five test questions for consideration to be placed on the test. No more than ten or twelve questions are used, although over one hundred to two hundred are usually submitted. Students get 2 points for any question used.

This has several advantages. First, the instructor gets feedback about what the students perceive as important in the course and the material. Second, the instructor finds out what areas were not clear to the students as some students submit questions with the wrong answer marked as correct. This helps in the review session. Third, it once again gives the student a feeling that (s)he is a participant in the learning process as opposed to a passive learner, and students comment that thinking about test questions helps them study the material.

In short, evaluation of learning can be diverse to accommodate different learning styles. By adding participation, writing, speaking and discussion, and student feedback to the course, the large lecture does not have to be a passive learning environment.

## How Do Students React?

To test the effectiveness of some of these approaches, students were asked to evaluate the course and the teaching methods toward the end of the semester.

### Methodology

A two page questionnaire was administered to rate how students felt about large lecture classes in general and particularly the effectiveness of a number of the different teaching techniques described. Students were given the questionnaire upon arrival in class and were given approximately ten minutes to fill it out. As mandated by the university human subject policy, students were given the opportunity to not participate and were instructed that all results were strictly anonymous and would in no way affect their grades. At the end of ten minutes, the surveys were collected, but students were given an opportunity to turn in completed surveys at a later time if they were not finished. A total of 131 surveys were returned with 22 not completed fully or containing only demographic information.

For attitude questions and rankings, a seven point Likert scale was used. A seven point scale was used, as it has been observed in past research that many respondents are less likely to select the very highest and lowest option, so a 7 point scale still left room for differentiation.

The scale for activities, presentations and attitudes was:

| Rank | Activity Ranking | Attitude Ranking |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Liked very much | Strongly agree |
| 2 | Liked | Agree |
| 3 | Liked somewhat | Somewhat agree |
| 4 | Neutral | Neither agree or disagree |
| 5 | Disliked somewhat | Somewhat disagree |
| 6 | Disliked | Disagree |
| 7 | Disliked strongly | Strongly disagree |
| 8 | Missed activity or no answer | |

Students were also asked a number of questions about large lecture classes in general before being specifically asked about the group presentations and free speech topics.

## Results

Students overwhelmingly replied that they enjoyed discussing issues and current events in class: 17.5 percent strongly agreed, 37.9 percent agreed and 18.4 percent agreed somewhat for 73.8 percent desiring class discussion. Another 12.6 were neutral on the issue with less than 14 percent not wanting discussion in class.

A second question, designed to reinforce the question on discussion, asked if students enjoyed hearing other student's viewpoints and ideas. Again, there was strong positive response: 20.4 percent strongly agreed, 35.9 percent agreed and 24.3 percent agreed somewhat for a total of 80.6 percent enjoying hearing the views of their fellow students. Another 13.6 percent were neutral with less than 6 percent disagreeing at some level.

**Feedback on "Donahue In The Classroom".**

When students were asked if they liked the role playing/group presentations in general, only 7.8 percent of the students did not like the groups. Of the remaining, 20.4 percent liked very much, 40.8 percent liked, 25.2 percent liked somewhat, 2.9 percent were neutral and 1.9 percent marked no comment. On the qualitative comments, 2 students who did not like the presentations felt the research and information was not in-depth enough for the amount of extra credit points earned. One respondent felt the idea was good, but needed more control by the instructor.

The rankings for individual groups were slightly less favorable. The group the students liked the best was the issue of too much sex in advertising and should it be controlled. Here, 21.4 percent liked very much, 42.7 percent liked, 21.4 percent liked somewhat, 8.7 percent were neutral while 2.9 percent disliked somewhat, 1.9 percent disliked strongly and 1.9 percent marked no comment.

Next came the issue of subliminal advertising and whether its use should be allowed. Here, 33.0 percent liked very much, 34.0 percent liked, 15.5 percent liked somewhat, 8.7 percent were neutral while 2.9 percent disliked somewhat, 2.9 percent disliked strongly and 2.9 percent marked no comment.

Third was the issue of political advertising, including the issue of should political advertising be restricted from broadcast media. Here, 10.7 percent liked very much, 35.9 percent liked, 25.2 percent liked somewhat, 10.7 percent were neutral while 6.8 percent disliked somewhat, 1.9 percent disliked, and 4.9 percent disliked strongly and 3.9 percent marked no comment or missed the presentation.

The final issue was that alcohol and tobacco advertising should be banned. Here, 14.6 percent liked very much, 27.2 percent liked, 25.2 percent liked somewhat, 8.7 percent were neutral while 11.7 percent disliked somewhat, 4.9 percent disliked, and 3.9 percent disliked strongly and 3.9 percent marked no comment or missed the presentation.

All four presentations and all groups together had rankings that are very unlikely to have happened by chance as the Chi Square distribution for goodness of fit indicates.

Table Two

Chi Square distribution of group ranking results

| Group | Degrees of Freedom | Chi Square | Sig. (p<.05) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Overall Groups | 6 | 101.168 | 0.0000 |
| Sex in Adv. | 6 | 103.745 | 0.0000 |
| Subliminal | 6 | 91.520 | 0.0000 |
| Political Adv. | 6 | 68.222 | 0.0000 |
| Alcohol/Tobacco | 6 | 38.949 | 0.0000 |

n=109

An analysis of variance showed that there was no significant difference as to how well students liked the group presentations based on gender, year in school, major or grade point average.

There is, however, a significant difference in how much discussion students prefer in class when students are compared by year in school. Using a oneway analysis of variance ($p<.05$) F= 3.120 for a probability of .0294. Although this shows a significant difference, post hoc analysis shows no significant difference between groups at the .05 level using the Tukey and Scheffe procedures. Dropping the significance to .10 level indicates that the difference lies between sophomores and two other groups, freshman and seniors.

### Evaluating Trivi-Ad

Just 3% of the class disliked Trivi-Ad. Here, 35.9 percent liked very much, 40.8 percent liked, 16.5 percent liked somewhat, 1.9 percent were neutral, while 1 percent disliked somewhat, 1 percent disliked, 1 percent disliked strongly and 1.9 percent marked no comment.

In fact, over half the class, 54.4 percent, felt it should be used more, while 31.1 percent felt it was used about the right amount. About 8 percent wanted less with remaining having no opinion.

An analysis of variance showed that there was no significant difference as to how well students liked the activity based on gender, year in school, major or grade point average.

### Evaluation Procedures.

Students definitely liked submitting test questions, where 54.4 percent liked very much, 22.3 percent liked, 14.6 percent liked somewhat, 1.9 percent were neutral, while 1 percent disliked somewhat and 1.0 percent marked no opinion.

An analysis of variance showed that there was no significant difference as to how well students liked the idea of submitting test questions based on gender, year in school, major or grade point average.

### Benefits of These Teaching Methods

The first and major benefit is the benefit to the students who find these activities fun, exciting and interesting. As shown, students strongly approve of the teaching methods. When asked to compare the subject matter of this class to ALL other large lecture courses taken there were no students who disliked the material. Nearly 80 percent ranked "liked it" or "liked it very much".

By using a combination of techniques, many of the drawbacks of the large lecture are overcome. Participation, while not as easy in the large classroom as in smaller settings, is not impossible.

Participation helps to move students away from simple memorization of facts and information, and moves them to higher order thinking skills. Educational psychologist B.S. Bloom identified six possible levels of learning (Bloom, 1956), see Table 1.
(Insert Table One About Here)
Large lecture classes seldom get students beyond level one or perhaps level two. Students simply are given the information and are asked to recall it on an objective exam. This is very low level learning. In the role playing exercise, students are required to use much higher level thinking skills, to weigh and analyze information and to formulate arguments to other student positions. It is almost certain that students will remember the information they discovered for this presentation when compared to other facts and figures from the class.

Students are moved toward using higher learning skills and get a chance to be critical, to write and present information in group projects and Three Minute Theses.

The isolation problem can be overcome. If the instructor gets out from behind the podium, s(he) breaks down that artificial barrier. Anonymity is tackled by getting students involved and introducing them in class. Plus, small group projects force students to meet one another.

Finally, as shown, student feedback and inherent problems in evaluation are not impossible to overcome.

Overall, students indicate that at all grade levels and independent of other variables, students want to discuss issues and be involved in even large lecture classes. The methods presented appear to meet theoretical education needs, and gain wide acceptance from students.

Table One
BLOOM'S TAXONOMY

| Level | Learning Objective | Description of Learning |
|---|---|---|
| One | Basic Knowledge | Student recalls or recognizes information. |
| Two | Comprehension | Student changes information to a different symbolic form. |
| Three | Application | Student discovers relationships generalizations and skills. |
| Four | Analysis | Student solves problems through conscious knowledge of the relationships be components and the principle that organizes the system. |
| Five | Objective Synthesis | Student goes beyond what is known and provides new insights. |
| Six | Objective Evaluation | Student develops the ability to create standards of judgement, to weigh and to analyze. |

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## APPENDIX 1

### Trivi-Ad Disclaimers and Sample Questions.

TRIVI-AD -- THE DISCLAIMERS

1. Realizing that all questions have been lifted from other sources we agree to keep our mouths shut to the authorities that be--whoever and where ever they be--so that your instructor does not get sued. Failure to do so will get you in deep do-do.

2. The questions for TRIVI-AD have been carefully researched through tedious minutes of searching, although the answers have not.

3. Due to the nature of this course, all answers given as correct will stand no matter to any proof of the countrary. Your instructor is bull headed and arbitrary and will award points and grades as he sees fit.
Anybody found disagreeing is itching for a fight.

4. If you've already played TRIVI-AD please sit on your hands and give someone else a chance to be humiliated.

**Sample Questions**

Q: It is estimated that nearly 1/3 of the WORLD'S population of 1.6 billion people watched what special telethon in July of 1985:
A: Live Aid to raise funds for Ethiopia. It included a hook-up by a record of 12 sattelites. It was the most successful appeal ever made be TV.
SOURCE: Guinness Book of World Records,1989

Q: The Serial that attracted the highest U.S. viewership ever:
  A: Who Shot JR in Dallas
  B: The Final Episode of Mash
  C: When "Lucy" had her baby
A: Mash drew an estimated total audience of 125 million people in the US with a 60.3% rating and 77% share of the viewing audience.
SOURCE: Guinness Book of World Records,1989

Q: A study in 1985 estimated that by a childs 16th birthday the average child would have seen how many TV murders or attempted murders:
  A: 100,000
  B: 50,000
  C: 25,000
A: 50,000 according to National Coalition on TV

Q: The AVERAGE viewing time for children beteen the age of 2 and 11 is how many hours per week (within 2)
A: 28 (correct answers from 26 to 30 )
SOURCE: Guinness Book of World Records,1989

The largest Billboard in the world is is 210 ft by 35 ft and contains 35,000 ft of neon (it weighs 126 tons). What city is it located in?
A. Hong Kong
SOURCE: Guinness Book of World Records,1989

Q: The largest sign advertising an American city is:
A: Hollywood. with a 370 ft wide sign above Los Angeles.
SOURCE: Guinness Book of World Records,1989

Q: The largest chain restauant in the WORLD is located in what city and country?
A: Beijing, China--within sight of Mao's tomb!
SOURCE: Megatrends 2000

# Media Frames: Approaches to Conceptualization and Measurement

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## ABSTRACT

The concept of framing has become a popular one, with the term being used by media critics, communication scholars, and political insiders alike. This paper discusses three approaches to measuring frames, including the "media package" approach, the "multidimensional concept" approach, and a new approach — the "list of frames" approach. Data testing the "list of frames" approach are reported, and suggestions are made for improving the measurement of framing.

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# Media Frames: Approaches to Conceptualization and Measurement

The concept of framing appears to be emerging as a significant one in mass communication theorizing and research. The term is used widely by both communication researchers and media critics, as well as political insiders.

Numerous researchers are using the concept in discussions of news coverage. For instance, Tuchman (1978) discusses framing as an important idea in her book *Making News* and Gitlin (1980) uses framing as a central concept in his discussion of media coverage of the New Left in the 1960s. Lang and Lang (1983), in their book describing the formation of public opinion regarding Watergate, include framing as a vital part of the agenda-building process. Hackett (1985) presents framing as part of a new approach to news studies that is replacing the old "objectivity and bias" paradigm.

Media critics have also taken on the term. Noam Chomsky used the term framing in an interview (Szykowny, 1990) to refer to the way The New York Times introduced a news story reporting an offer on August 23, 1990, by Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait. Basically, Chomsky argued that the Times story marginalized the Iraqi offer by opening its story with a statement from the U.S. government discrediting it.

Another media critic, David Shaw of the Los Angeles Times, used the word frame in a discussion of media coverage of abortion. Shaw (1990) stated that "the very language used to frame the abortion debate in much of the media implicitly favors the abortion rights advocates."

News stories occasionally quote political insiders in ways that show that these insiders are familiar with both the term and the concept of framing. For instance, a news article pointing out that opinion polls on abortion often yield contradictory results (Tumulty, 1990) quoted pollster Harrison Hickman as saying, "Just as the polls come out according to the way the question is asked, so will the outcome of elections depend on who is more successful in framing what the question is about." Another case was a story on the U.S.-Iraq confrontation published in USA Today on August 21, 1990 (Keen, 1990). This story quoted Rep. Lee Hamilton, chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Middle East Subcommittee, as saying, "The United States must not go it alone. We must frame this confrontation as a confrontation between the international community, on the one hand, and Iraq, on the other."

Framing appears useful to researchers as a means of referring to how an event is portrayed in a particular news story. Mass communication research needs a method to examine not just what events are reported in the news media — the goal of many past quantitative content analysis studies — but how the events are reported. Shoemaker and Reese (1991) argue that this is why we need qualitative research — to deal with the question of what the coverage is like. McLeod, Sun, Chi and Pan (1990) also argue for the importance of determining how the media present an issue. They seem to be suggesting that it is time to reformulate or extend agenda setting to include the possibility "that the media influence not only what we think about an issue but also how we think about an issue" (p. 1, italics in the original).

One problem with the concept of framing as it is being used, however, is that it is not always carefully defined. Frequently it is used in a vague way, or apparently just as a metaphor. Also, with some authors, the determination of what frames are being used in news stories about a certain event or situation seems to be done essentially by authority or by fiat. The researcher declares that a certain frame is being used, but does not explain how the frame was identified.

One unfortunate result of this tendency to define frames by fiat may be that the researcher devotes little effort to being exhaustive about the possible frames that could occur in reporting a particular topic. There may be a tendency for researchers to find the frames they are consciously or unconsciously looking for. At its worst, this would mean researchers would see only the one frame that they are sympathetic to or are expecting to see. In a slightly less objectionable form, researchers might see the possible frames in a very stereotyped way (such as viewing the abortion debate as involving only two positions — pro-choice and pro-life).

The purpose of this paper is to clarify the concept of media framing and discuss various approaches to measuring it. The end goal, although not completely achieved in this paper, would be to develop an operational definition that could be used to empirically determine frames by a procedure that is valid and reliable. In a sense, the approach presented here is an attempt to bridge the gap between a quantitative approach and a qualitative approach to the study of news.

## Approaches to Defining Framing

Although the term is used loosely and is often undefined, some scholars have sought to explain what a frame is, as well as identify the framing process. We have discovered that frames have been discussed on both the individual level as well as the level of the medium that produces the frame. Some of the proposed definitions share key features, and some researchers have suggested methods to identify news frames. Although we were predominantly concerned with print media, we did not discount discussion of television news framing. Literature addressing bias and objectivity was also examined in our search for discussions of framing. Several writers about the frame concept, including Goffman and Tuchman, cite an early article by Gregory Bateson as their source for the term. In Bateson's (1972) discussion of frames and contexts, he defines a psychological frame as that which "is (or delimits) a class or set of messages (or meaningful actions)" (p. 186). While a frame is sometimes consciously recognized by a verbal reference, Bateson notes that sometimes there is no explicit reference to the frame, and a subject may not be conscious of it.

Using the analogy of a picture frame, he states that psychological frames are both exclusive and inclusive; that is, by including certain messages within a frame, certain other messages are excluded, and by excluding certain messages, other messages are included. The message within the frame is "intended to order or organize the perception of the viewer" (p. 187) by telling the viewer to attend to what is within the frame, and not to attend to that which is outside.

Goffman (1974) states in his book that he will make much use of Bateson's use of the term "frame." Then he adds, "I assume that definitions of a situation are built up in accordance with principles of organization which govern events — at least social ones — and our subjective involvement in them; frame is the word I use to refer to such of these basic elements as I am able to identify" (pp. 10-11). Goffman essentially uses frames as ways of answering the basic question of "What is it that's going on here?" (p.8). He notes that one situation in which frames become visible is the frame dispute, in which parties with opposing versions of events openly disagree with each other over how to define what has been or is happening.

In *Making News*, Tuchman (1978) defines a frame in the words of Goffman: a frame is "the principles of organization which govern events — at least social ones — and our subjective involvement in them" (p. 192). Goffman's frames organize "strips," which are "arbitrary slices or cuts from the stream of ongoing activity" (p. 192). They take nonrecognizable happenings and shape them into perceptible events.

Gitlin (1980) provides one of the most comprehensive discussions of media framing in his examination of how the media dealt with the Students for a Democratic Society. He defines media frames as "persistent patterns of cognition, interpretation, and presentation, of selection, emphasis, and exclusion, by which symbol-handlers routinely organize discourse, whether verbal or visual" (p. 7).

Supporting the notion that a hegemonic world view influences media frames, Gitlin claims various framing devices were used by the media in covering SDS — among them, trivialization, polarization, marginalization, disparagement of numbers and effectiveness, and emphasis on negative elements like violence (p. 27). He suggests that the movement was trivialized by the highlighting of members' age, dress, and language, and that it was polarized by the balancing of the anti-war movement with the ultra-Right. Gitlin argues that SDS members were marginalized by being presented as deviant and not representative of the mainstream and that disparagement of the movement occurred through under-counting and suggestions that the movement was ineffective.

Gitlin suggests that if the media are to be seen as mirrors, it ought to be as "mirrors in a fun house" (p. 29). He says the framing of an issue is influenced by which of many bits of information are included in or excluded from a story. He says:

> Media are mobile spotlights, not passive mirrors of the society; selectivity is the instrument of their action. A news story adopts a certain frame and rejects or downplays material that is discrepant. A story is a choice, a way of seeing an event that also amounts to a way of screening from sight" (p. 49).

A major theme of Gitlin's book is that media frames are persistent: the initial frame tends to determine how the issue will be presented in the future.

Although Schiller (1981) does not provide a definition of framing, he uses it in his introduction to *Objectivity and the News*. An invisible frame, he writes, "brackets news reports as a particular kind of public knowledge" (p. 2). Schiller denies that the reporting of news can be objective because it relies upon conventions which "mask the patterned structure of news" (p. 2).

In his criticism of the bias paradigm, Hackett (1984) explains that ideology transcends the concept of bias. He argues that ideology provides a framework through which events are presented. Hackett draws on Gitlin's (1980) definition of media frames as presented earlier.

As an example, Hackett points out that the conflict in El Salvador is framed as a 'national security' issue and that other frames are possible such as a rich-versus-poor frame. He adds that "framing is not necessarily a conscious process on the part of journalists; it may well be the result of the unconscious absorption of assumptions about the social world in which the news must be embedded in order to be intelligible to its intended audience" (p. 262-263).

Graber (1988) places framing at the media level, defining frames as the interpretive background by which a story is judged. She further states that when journalists choose content and frame it, they are constructing reality for their audiences.

Rachlin (1988) suggests that the media do not merely resort to stereotypes that are part of a shared vocabulary with the audience; he relies on Tuchman's suggestion that the media provide a frame for a "preferred reading." Moreover, in examining coverage of the shooting down of Korean Airlines Flight 007 and of the Solidarity movement in Poland, Rachlin suggests that it is a hegemonic world view that is the source of media frames.

In his discussion of the coverage of KAL Flight 007, he suggests that the media's framing of the issues, in some hegemonic way, was similar to the U.S. government's account of the incident. Rachlin concedes that conflicting information also was included but points out that it was not highlighted. He suggests that the media presented "the dominant American frame of good versus evil" and makes the accusation that:

> Though American journalists had access to, and indeed knowledge of, information that could reduce the impression of Soviet culpability and avoid reinforcing the image of an immoral or amoral Soviet society, that information was consistently ignored or "hidden" within their work (p. 93).

Some of the Canadian media, Rachlin says, framed the KAL incident as a part of the superpower contest and, while still taking in some of the American frame, managed to keep more of a spectator's distance. As part of his "news-as-ideology thesis," Rachlin suggests that the coverage of Solidarity also relied strongly on government sources.

Also looking at the concept from the media level, Gamson (1989) defines a frame as "a central organizing idea for making sense of relevant events and suggesting what is at issue." Frames give meaning to facts about a news story by organizing them in a coherent manner, and they emphasize certain facts while neglecting others. Subsequently, he suggests thinking of news as the telling of stories rather than as the presentation of news events.

In order to analyze news frames, Gamson emphasizes the need to acknowledge the existence of multiple "senders," including the reporter and/or anchor, as well as quoted sources. Also, there may be multiple or competing frames within the same story. He suggests that there are indicators within the interpretive language of a story that convey the frame or underlying meaning of the story. These indicators include such framing devices as metaphors and catchphrases.

Gamson and Modigliani (1989) perceive media discourse as a set of interpretive packages that give meaning to an issue. The interpretive package has an internal structure, which at its core is a central organizing idea, or frame. In their study, Gamson and Modigliani examined the different frames that the nuclear power topic can take on. After studying news magazines, cartoons, television discourse, and opinion columns, they compiled a list of five framing devices, including metaphors, exemplars, catchphrases, depictions, and visual images.

Barkin (1989) asserts that television can frame events not only with verbal content, but with what he calls television syntax as well. He states that "each television news story produces meaning through the combination of temporal, verbal, visual, and audial signs. The verbal text, for example, does not convey meaning apart from the simultaneous progression of visual images. Even within the visual text itself, the meaning of the story would be quite different if the sequence of scenes were to be altered. Barkin argues, therefore, that the use of content analysis to derive meaning from television news stories is ineffective because "item counts — whether verbal or visual — may render the text as no more than the sum of its parts."

Barkin breaks down syntactic television news framing into six parts: 1) introductions and conclusions; 2) narrators (anchors, correspondents); 3) characters appearing in the news story; 4) settings used in establishing sequences; 5) verbal text; and 6) graphic symbols and photographic techniques which serve as "aesthetic devices" that give meaning to a news event.

In *Democracy without Citizens* (1989), Robert Entman also attacks the concept of objectivity and attempts to define "news slant," which seems to be a closely related term, if not a synonym, of framing. He states, "the problem is that facts do not speak for themselves. Choosing how to put facts together and which to emphasize inevitably affects what audiences perceive as reality . . . These selections do impart a slant to the news and influence politics — but not in the manner alleged by critics" (p. 30).

Along the same lines, Roeh (1989) refutes the Western journalist's idea that facts actually "speak for themselves." News stories, he believes, are never free of judgment and interpretation; they are, in fact, narratives. A journalist does not simply report facts when he or she writes a news story. The journalist is participating in an age-old and instinctive human art — the art of storytelling. Storytelling, or narrating, is the way people translate knowing into telling. This does not mean that narratives are false — they simply construct a point of view. In essence, "stories constitute what we perceive as facts."

Roeh suggests that different media provide different narrative frameworks. The popular press, for example, can be characterized by romantic and melodramatic storytelling, while the elite press use irony in their narratives. Roeh stresses that these different frameworks can only be identified through comparative studies. Only through comparison can we get beyond the facts and start to understand the process of "meaning-production."

## Arriving at a Theoretical Definition

We developed our own theoretical definition for the term frame by consolidating and editing definitions and explanations offered by previous authors. Examining the various uses of the term frame made it possible to tease out three distinct ways in which the framing metaphor applies to media content. The most useful, comprehensive theoretical definition of the concept frame should provide room for the use of any or all of these metaphors.

Two of these metaphorical uses of the term frame can be based on the way a picture frame functions. The explanation of framing offered by Tuchman (1978) is one example. Borrowing the concept of a "strip" from Goffman (1974), Tuchman says, "Frames organize 'strips' of the everyday world." A strip, as Goffman defines it, is "an arbitrary slice or cut from the stream of ongoing activity." Such "strips" are precisely what is found in a picture frame. A small frame placed on a large picture — whether it is a painting, a photograph, or a real-world scene — must cut some "slice" from that picture at the expense of other possible slices. Gitlin's (1980) definition of framing also conjures up this image of a picture frame by suggesting that framing occurs through, among other processes, "selection, emphasis, and exclusion." Gamson (1989) says a frame suggests "what is at issue." It would also determine, necessarily, what is not.

A second use of the picture frame metaphor would allow the media to set a tone for an event or issue through the choice of frames, just as a different tone can be set for a picture placed in an ornate gold frame than is set for a picture placed in a rustic wooden one. Such a use of the frame metaphor would apply well to Graber's (1989) suggestion that "framing supplies the interpretive background by which the story is judged." Gitlin as well says that frames are patterns of "interpretation, and presentation."

The third metaphorical use of the term frame can be better visualized, not as a picture frame, but as the frame of a house or other building. A frame is the organizing structure upon which a house is built, just as a frame can be the organizing idea on which a story is built. This paper suggests that elaboration of an idea is similar to the process of building. This use of the frame metaphor can be applied to Gamson's definition. Gamson (1989) says, "A frame is a central organizing idea for making sense of relevant events and suggesting what is at issue."

The theoretical definition devised for this paper owes something to all of the above definitions and explanations of the frame concept. These ideas have been consolidated and modified by the current authors, who also have contributed some new ideas, such as elaboration, to the attempt to understand the concept of framing. This approach made possible a more comprehensive and economical theoretical definition than could be expected from just one previous definition. The concept is defined as follows:

> A **frame** is a central organizing idea for news content that supplies a context and suggests what the issue is through the use of selection, emphasis, exclusion, and elaboration.

## Previous Approaches to Measurement of Framing

### *The "Media Package" Approach*

Gamson and Modigliani (1989) operationalized frames in terms of paragraphs they call "media packages." For instance, the following paragraph is the package they present for a frame that describes nuclear power in terms of progress:

> If the electric chair had been invented before the electric light, would we still be using kerosene lamps? There has always been resistance to technological progress by nervous Nellies who see only the problems and ignore the benefits. Resistance to nuclear energy development is the latest version of this irrational fear of progress and change, the expression of modern pastoralists and nuclear Luddites. Certainly nuclear energy development is not free of problems, but problems can be solved, as the history of technological progress shows. The failure to develop nuclear power will retard our economic growth and make us renege on our obligation to the poor and to future generations. If coercive utopians prevent us from moving ahead now with nuclear energy, the next generation is likely to be sitting around in the dark blaming the utilities for not doing something this generation's officials would not let them do.

Gamson and Modigliani explain that a paragraph such as the one above is a combination of paraphrasing and direct quotes from multiple sources. The language in the paragraph is taken from pamphlets and other writings by advocates and sponsors of the position described in the paragraph. They argue that this kind of package "offers a number of different condensing symbols that suggest the core frame and positions in shorthand, making it possible to display the package as a whole with a deft metaphor, catchphrase, or other symbolic device" (p. 3).

Gamson and Modigliani conducted a content analysis of television news broadcasts and news magazines in which they used three-digit codes that broke packages down into specific idea elements. Within the progress package, they identified such categories as "Underdeveloped nations can especially benefit from peaceful uses of nuclear energy" or "Nuclear power is necessary for maintaining economic growth and our way of life." The coder looked for these kinds of specific categories instead of making a global judgment about the package. They report that two independent coders were used on a sample of material "and distinctions among code categories were not maintained whenever the reliability failed to reach 80%" (p. 11).

### *The "Framing as a Multidimensional Concept" Approach*

In a study of how newspapers frame abortion news, Swenson (1990) coded eight elements or dimensions of stories that could contribute to framing. These elements were gender of the writer, placement of the article (front page; editorial; first section, not page 1; other), terms used to refer to the pro-choice group (pro-choice or abortion rights, pro-abortion or anti-life, combination, not applicable), terms used to refer to the pro-life group (pro-life or right-to-life, anti-abortion or anti-choice, combination, not applicable), whether the woman's rights or the fetus's rights are considered paramount, the morality orientation of the article, discussion of when life begins, and terms used to refer to the fetus. Swenson assessed reliability by the test-retest method, with the same coder apparently coding the same sample of content at two different times. She reports reliabilities were generally 100% except for the categories of "terms for pro-life" and "morality orientation," where reliabilities dropped to 90%.

## A New Method: The "List of Frames" Approach

We attempted to come up with a new method of measuring frames that would consist of developing a list of possible frames for a domain of news content and compiling a definition and list of indicators for each frame on the list. Coders involved in a content analysis of news content would then be able to take the list of frames, read a sample of news articles looking for the indicators, and assign each article to a frame.

The list of frames would make up a nominal or categorical variable, an approach with some methodological similarities to the list of important issues typically used in agenda-setting studies or the list of uses for mass communication typically used in uses and gratifications studies. As much as possible, the frames on the list should be mutually exclusive and should cover the major approaches taken to the domain (they should include the major positions taken by advocates on all sides, for instance). The list of frames might not be exhaustive, and in fact the list for a particular domain would to some extent be shaped by the purposes of a particular research study.

One complication is that a new list of frames would have to be created for each area or domain of news content. A list of frames created for describing possible news content concerning abortion, for instance, would probably not be useful in looking at framing of the Persian Gulf crisis.

The list of frames should be created inductively, by looking at a sample of articles, and not by researcher fiat. This sample of news articles should obviously be different from the sample that will be analyzed later in the actual study. The researchers conducting a particular study will have to decide whether the sample for creating the list of frames should come from exactly the same universe that will be studied later or from a drastically different universe of content. If part of the purpose of the study is to consider frames that might not be appearing in news coverage, it might be necessary to create the list of frames by examining a different universe of content from the one to be studied.

The first step in attempting to identify a list of frames for a domain of interest is to gather approximately 20 articles dealing with the subject of interest. We recommend selecting a range of articles from newspaper news stories, newspaper editorials and opinion pieces, opinion magazine articles and news magazine articles.

We found that a useful procedure was to look for frames in terms of pro- and anti- positions that were being presented in the articles being examined. This helps to focus attention on disputes and positions taken by different advocates, and, as we have noted earlier, different framings often originate from different positions taken in a debate.

We also found that framing often showed up particularly at certain focal points of news presentations — often points that news producers use to emphasize elements of the news. We called these points "framing mechanisms," and they included the following:

1. Headlines and kickers
2. Subheads

3. Photographs
4. Photo captions
5. Leads
6. Selection of sources/affiliations
7. Selection of quotes
8. Pull quotes (quotes that are blown up in size for emphasis)
9. Logos (graphic identification of the particular series an article belongs to)
10. Statistics/charts and graphs
11. Concluding statements/paragraphs of articles

We also found that when attempting to identify frames it helped to read a number of articles and compare them with one another. This serves to highlight differences in framing.

We developed the following rules and procedures to identify frames.

1. Select at random 10-20 articles on the domain you wish to examine.

2. Have a minimum of three people read the articles and try to identify the issues arguing for and against each issue. Use the framing mechanisms (listed above) to help you identify issues.

3. Jot down the frames that are identified or even mentioned. Many of them take the form of pro and anti.

4. Once all the possible frames are identified, eliminate the ones that appear infrequently and then go back and look at the articles to determine what specific language and arguments serve as indicators for each frame.

## Testing the "List of Frames" Approach

We selected the topic of abortion to conduct a pilot test of the "list of frames" method of measuring frames. (We originally wanted to test the method on three domains of discourse — abortion, the Persian Gulf crisis, and eating disorders — but have only finished one so far.)

For any area or domain of news coverage, a number of lists of frames could be set up. Some of the abortion articles we looked at in trying to come up with frames, for instance, could have been put in a "political" frame, an "economic" frame, or a "protest" frame. We decided one way to identify the important frames, however, might be to focus on the differences in how the issue is defined by advocates on different sides of the issue. In a sense, we saw disputes over the way an issue might be looked at as a kind of key to identifying frames.

When we began trying to come up with the list of frames for the topic of abortion, one of the first articles we looked at did not fit neatly into either of the most common categories used to describe this debate — pro-choice or pro-life. This article seemed in subtle ways to be attacking the anti-abortion position. We saw this article as illustrating a frame with the somewhat awkward name of anti-anti-abortion. We found that still other categories were needed to reflect the diversity of frames used in articles dealing with abortion. We finally arrived at the following categories for frames: pro-life, pro-choice, pro-abortion, anti-abortion, anti-anti-abortion, and anti-pro-abortion. Still other frames — such as anti-pro-life and anti-pro-choice — showed up now and then, but were so infrequent that we decided to eliminate them from the list.

We decided not to use either "neutral" or "mixed" coding categories. We didn't use the neutral category because of the general idea that seems to be implicit in framing theory that every article must be framed. We didn't use a "mixed" category — that is, one that would indicate several of our framing categories at work — because this could become an easy out for coders and because it wouldn't give us any useful information about the frames being used.

This method of measuring frames dealing with abortion actually allowed us to think of frames in two different ways. One way is to count each of the six categories — pro-life, pro-choice, pro-abortion, anti-abortion, anti-anti-abortion, and anti-pro-abortion — as a separate frame. A second way is to strip off the antis and pros and look at it as if there were three frames, each representing an issue. Looked at this way, the three frames would be choice, life, and abortion. For certain research purposes, researchers might want to choose one of these ways of thinking about frames or the other.

Furthermore, the antis and pros can also be considered separately without regard to the issues. The antis and pros looked at separately are measuring the general orientation — favorable toward abortion or unfavorable toward abortion. This measure is essentially a measure of bias as it has been considered under the old "objectivity-bias" paradigm.

We conducted two pilot tests of the "list of frames" approach. The first test involved samples of newspaper and magazine articles from 1990 dealing with abortion. The second test was an attempt to improve over the first by using revised instructions, a new coding instrument, and a training session for coders. This second test involved samples of newspaper news articles, magazine articles, and newspaper editorials from 1990 dealing with abortion.

### *Pilot Test 1*

For the first pilot test, we used 10 newspaper articles randomly selected from 518 articles dealing with abortion that appeared in the News Bank database from January to August 1990, and 10 magazine articles randomly selected from 136 articles dealing with abortion that appeared in the General Periodicals Index from January to September 1990. Professional and academic journals were excluded from the periodical list before sampling.

Nine journalism graduate students served as coders. Coders were given photocopies of the articles, a sheet of general instructions (including the framing mechanisms), and a list of the six abortion frames with a set of indicators for each.

With this large a number of coders, we used a simplified method of computing coder reliability. We looked at one story at a time, identified the predominant frame category assigned, and determined what percentage of coders selected that frame. Table 1 presents the results of the test of coder reliability for pilot test 1, with the percentages of agreement for each article reported at the bottom of the column for each article.

The overall percentage of agreement for pilot test 1 (found by averaging the percentages of agreement for the 20 articles) was 54.9. Looked at by type of article, the percentages were 58.9 for magazines and 50.9 for newspaper articles.

**TABLE 1**

**Intercoder Reliability Overall**
**For Pilot Test 1**

| | **NEWSPAPERS** | | | | | | | | | | **MAGAZINES** | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| story # | 3 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 11 | 12 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 20 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 5 | 9 | 10 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 19 |
| coder 1 | 5 | 1 | 1 | 5 | - | 2 | - | 1 | 5 | 5 | 1 | 2 | 5 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 1 |
| coder 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 6 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 4 | 2 | 6 | 1 | 6 | 1 | 5 | 1 |
| coder 3 | 5 | 1 | 6 | 1 | 1 | 6 | 5 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 5 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 5 |
| coder 4 | 5 | - | 3 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 5 | 4 | - | - | 2 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 1 | - | 1 | 5 | 1 |
| coder 5 | 5 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 5 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 5 | 6 | 5 | 2 | 6 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 5 |
| coder 6 | 5 | 1 | - | 2 | 3 | 6 | 2 | - | 6 | - | 5 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 6 | 4 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 4 |
| coder 7 | 5 | 5 | 1 | 3 | 5 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 5 | 1 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 5 | 2 | 3 | 5 | 1 |
| coder 8 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | - | 4 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 6 | 1 | 2 | 5 | 1 | 1 |
| coder 9 | 5 | 3 | 6 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 5 | 1 | 6 | 5 | 6 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 1 |
| rel. (%) | 78 | 67 | 44 | 44 | 44 | 44 | 44 | 78 | 44 | 22 | 44 | 67 | 56 | 100 | 44 | 56 | 67 | 44 | 44 | 67 |

1 - pro-choice 3 - anti-abortion 5 - (anti) anti-abortion
2 - pro-life 4 - pro-abortion 6 - (anti) pro-abortion

The coding can also be looked at in terms of agreement in classifying stories according to issues (see Table 2) and in terms of agreement in classifying stories according to general orientation toward abortion (see Table 3). These coder reliability figures were higher, with 60.1 percent agreement in classifying stories according to issues and 78.6 percent agreement in classifying stories according to general orientation toward abortion.

These other levels of coding can also be looked at for the two types of articles — newspapers and magazines. For newspapers, the coders reached 53.2 percent agreement in classifying stories according to issues and 67.9 percent agreement in classifying stories according to general orientation toward abortion. For magazines, the coders reached 67 percent agreement in classifying stories according to issues and 89 percent in classifying stories according to general orientation toward abortion.

*Pilot Test 2*

For the second pilot test, we changed the sampling procedure somewhat. Five newspaper stories were randomly selected from newspapers available at the University of Texas library for 1990. We did that by first randomly selecting five newspaper titles from the 12 American newspaper titles available on microfilm. One month from 1990 was randomly selected for each newspaper. The first abortion article appearing in that month in that newspaper was included in the sample. The same procedure was used to select five newspaper editorials. The five magazine articles were additional ones randomly selected from the same set of 136 articles from the General Periodicals Index used in pilot test 1.

This time, six journalism graduate students served as coders. Coders were given photocopies of the new articles, a revised sheet of general instructions (including the framing mechanisms), and a refined version of the list of the six abortion frames with a set of indicators for each. This refined

**Table 2**

**Intercoder Reliability by Issue**
**For Pilot Test 1**

| | NEWSPAPERS | | | | | | | | | | MAGAZINES | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| story # | 3 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 11 | 12 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 20 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 5 | 9 | 10 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 19 |
| coder 1 | A | C | C | A | - | L | - | C | A | A | C | L | A | L | L | C | L | A | C | C |
| coder 2 | C | C | C | L | C | C | C | C | A | A | C | C | A | L | A | C | A | C | A | C |
| coder 3 | A | C | A | C | C | A | A | C | C | L | A | L | C | L | A | A | A | A | A | A |
| coder 4 | A | - | A | L | A | A | A | A | A | - | - | L | C | L | A | C | - | C | A | C |
| coder 5 | A | C | C | C | C | A | C | C | C | C | A | A | A | L | A | A | L | L | C | A |
| coder 6 | A | C | - | L | A | A | L | - | A | - | A | L | C | L | A | A | L | A | A | A |
| coder 7 | A | A | C | A | A | C | C | C | C | L | A | C | A | L | L | A | L | A | A | C |
| coder 8 | C | C | L | C | C | C | C | C | C | - | A | L | C | L | A | C | L | A | C | C |
| coder 9 | A | A | A | C | L | C | A | C | A | A | A | L | C | L | L | C | L | A | C | C |
| rel. (%) | 78 | 67 | 44 | 44 | 44 | 44 | 44 | 78 | 56 | 33 | 67 | 67 | 56 | 100 | 67 | 56 | 67 | 67 | 56 | 67 |

| | |
|---|---|
| C - choice | [pro-choice] |
| L - life | [pro-life] |
| A - abortion | [anti-abortion, pro-abortion, (anti) anti-abortion, (anti) pro-abortion] |

## TABLE 3

### Intercoder Reliability by General Orientation (favorable or unfavorable toward abortion) for Pilot Test 1

| | NEWSPAPERS | | | | | | | | | | MAGAZINES | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| story # | 3 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 11 | 12 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 20 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 5 | 9 | 10 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 19 |
| coder 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | - | 1 | - | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 |
| coder 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| coder 3 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| coder 4 | 2 | - | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | - | - | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | - | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| coder 5 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 |
| coder 6 | 2 | 2 | - | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | - | 1 | - | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 |
| coder 7 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 |
| coder 8 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | - | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| coder 9 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 |
| rel. (%) | 100 | 78 | 44 | 56 | 59 | 67 | 89 | 89 | 67 | 33 | 78 | 78 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 89 | 89 | 56 | 100 | 100 |

1 - not generally favorable toward abortion [anti-abortion, (anti) pro-abortion, pro-life]
2 - generally favorable toward abortion [pro-abortion, (anti) anti-abortion, pro-choice]

list placed the six frames in a two-dimensional matrix, with issues (choice, life, abortion, and movement) making up one dimension and general orientation toward abortion (generally favorable toward abortion and generally unfavorable toward abortion) making up the other dimension (see Figure 1). The movement category was added to the list of issues to create a column in the matrix for the anti-pro-abortion and anti-anti-abortion frames. These frames present arguments that are responses to arguments presented by others, and are in a sense looking at abortion in terms of groups or movements. Two cells in the two-by-four matrix are empty, since it is rare to see anyone taking an anti-life or anti-choice position.

Coder reliability was computed in the same way as in the first pilot test. Results are reported in Table 4. The overall percentage of agreement (found by averaging the percentages of agreement for the 15 articles and editorials) was 56.3. Looked at by type of article, the percentages were 66.4 for editorials, 56.4 for magazines, and 46.2 for newspaper articles.

As in pilot test 1, we also broke the results for pilot test 2 down in terms of agreement in classifying stories according to issues (choice, life, abortion, and movement) and in terms of agreement in classifying stories according to general orientation toward abortion (generally favorable toward abortion and generally unfavorable toward abortion). These figures showed 63.0 percent agreement in classifying stories according to issues and 83.8 percent agreement in classifying stories according to general orientation toward abortion.

These additional levels of coding were also looked at for the three types of articles — newspaper news stories, newspaper editorials, and magazine articles. For newspapers, the coders reached 52.8 percent agreement in classifying stories according to issues and 69.8 percent agreement in classifying stories according to general orientation toward abortion. For magazines, the coders reached 69.8 percent agreement in classifying stories according to issues and 83.0 percent agreement in classifying stories according to general orientation toward abortion. For newspaper editorials, the coders reached 66.4 percent agreement in classifying stories according to issues and 96.6 percent agreement in classifying stories according to general orientation toward abortion.

## TABLE 4

### Intercoder Reliability for Pilot Test 2

| | NEWSPAPERS | | | | | MAGAZINES | | | | | EDITORIALS | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| story # | 2 | 4 | 6 | 7 | 9 | 1 | 3 | 5 | 8 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 |
| coder 1 | M1 | A2 | C2 | M2 | A1 | C2 | M2 | C2 | M1 | C2 | C2 | M2 | C2 | M2 | L1 |
| coder 2 | C2 | A2 | A1 | C2 | M2 | C2 | M2 | A2 | M2 | M2 | A2 | A2 | C2 | C2 | C2 |
| coder 3 | M1 | C2 | M2 | M2 | M1 | M2 | A2 | M2 | M2 | M2 | C2 | A2 | C2 | M2 | M1 |
| coder 4 | M2 | L1 | C2 | C2 | C2 | A1 | M2 | M2 | M2 | C2 | M2 | C2 | C2 | M2 | L1 |
| coder 5 | L1 | C2 | C2 | M2 | C2 | A2 | M2 | M2 | M1 | M2 | C2 | C2 | C2 | A2 | L1 |
| coder 6 | M2 | M1 | C2 | M2 | L1 | A1 | M2 | M1 | M2 | C2 | C2 | C2 | C2 | C2 | L1 |
| **Rel. (%)** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| overall | 33 | 33 | 66 | 66 | 33 | 33 | 83 | 50 | 66 | 50 | 66 | 50 | 100 | 50 | 66 |
| issue | 66 | 33 | 66 | 66 | 33 | 50 | 83 | 66 | 100 | 50 | 66 | 50 | 100 | 50 | 66 |
| orientation | 50 | 66 | 83 | 100 | 50 | 66 | 100 | 83 | 66 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 83 |

A1 - anti-abortion
A2 - pro-abortion
M1 - (anti) pro-abortion
M2 - (anti) anti-abortion
L1 - pro-life
C2 - pro-choice

We expected the coder reliability figures to be higher, especially after conducting a second test based on what we perceived to be weaknesses of the first test. Nevertheless, we found it noteworthy that coder reliability varied according to some of the different circumstances of our test, and that some of the figures reached commonly accepted levels of reliability.

The reliability coefficients were lowest when we looked at agreement in assigning stories to one of the six frames. Coefficients were somewhat higher when we looked at agreement in assigning stories to one of the three or four issues, and they were highest when we looked at agreement in assigning stories to one of the two general orientations toward abortion. The percentages of agreement for the last kind of coder reliability were in the upper 70s or low 80s — a range generally found acceptable in content analysis studies. As we have noted, this way of tabulating the results of coding basically corresponds to assessing bias under the old "bias-objectivity" paradigm.

Coder agreement also varied by type of article, with the highest percentage of agreement for editorials, the next highest for magazine articles, and the least agreement for newspaper news articles. Although we did not state it as a formal hypothesis, we did expect that frames might be more apparent in editorials and magazine articles than in newspaper news articles.

Why wasn't the coding more reliable? We thought of several possible reasons:

1. Some articles would have fit best in frames we didn't have on our list, such as anti-pro-choice. There is a dilemma here, however, in that adding more frames to the list also gives the coder more categories to choose from and can therefore lead to decreased reliability.

2. Some articles (particularly news stories) might have contained elements of several frames. This could have been especially likely with the issue of abortion, which has been a matter of public debate for a long time. Compared with some other issues, abortion might be at an advanced stage in the life cycle of an issue. This could mean that protagonists on various sides of the issue are aware of arguments on the other sides, and that they tend to bring up the opposing arguments to refute them. This could lead to complex articles that in fact included elements from several frames.

3. Some stories might have actually been written fairly neutrally. For instance, several of the news stories in the two coder reliability check samples dealt with various legal matters — new

laws, pending court cases, and so forth. By sticking to these legal aspects, it was possible for reporters to write articles that contained few if any of our frame indicators.

4. Coders might have been reading their own views on abortion into the stories. This does not seem likely, however, when the coder agreement on general orientation toward abortion was around 80 percent in both pilot tests.

## Conclusions

Despite the fact that we were not able to develop a highly reliable measure of media frames, we feel that we did learn some things about framing. At the least, our results cast doubt on the validity of the "frame by fiat" approach. If different coders looking at the same articles with an objective coding scheme can come up with numerous choices for the frame being used, this raises questions about the identification of frames by one researcher acting alone.

With regard to abortion, we believe our results also suggest that conceptualizing the debate (and studies of media content) in terms of two frames — pro-life and pro-choice — is too simplistic. Our analysis suggested that several additional frames might be necessary to capture the varieties of positions currently being presented regarding abortion.

The three approaches to measuring frames — Gamson and Modigliani's "media package" approach, Swenson's "multidimensional concept" approach, and the present "list of frames" approach — represent somewhat different conceptualizations of framing. The "multidimensional concept" approach looks at several aspects of story presentation, ranging from such traditional content analysis variables as placement in the newspaper to such issue-specific categories as the terms that are used to refer to the fetus in abortion stories. The "media package" and "list of frames" approaches focus more on how the issue is defined by inclusion and exclusion of certain keywords and other terms. The two approaches differ primarily in the way frame indicators are found, with the "media package" approach examining pamphlets and other materials proposed by groups taking positions, and the "list of frames" approach looking at a sample of media content. They also differ in the ways the keywords and other terms are presented, with the "media package" approach presenting them in an integrated paragraph and the "list of frames" approach presenting them in lists of indicators.

All three approaches to measuring frames share the difficulty that the frames and frame elements must be redefined for each new topic being studied. That seems to be an unavoidable problem, since framing by definition is concerned with detailed differences in the ways particular stories are presented.

All three approaches may also share some difficulty in achieving conventionally accepted levels of coder reliability. Gamson and Modigliani report that distinctions among code categories were not maintained when the reliability failed to reach 80 percent, but they do not report an overall reliability figure. Swenson reports high coder reliability figures, but those figures are for test-retest reliability and not intercoder reliability.

Future research on the "list of frames" approach should obviously be aimed at achieving higher levels of coder reliability. Perhaps it would help to try the approach with issues other than abortion that might be at different points in the life cycle of an issue. At an earlier point in the life cycle of an issue, for instance, proponents of various positions might not be so likely to incorporate arguments for other positions into their statements.

Higher coder agreement scores might also be achieved if categories are included for "neutral" stories (those essentially without frames) or for "mixed" frames. Another possibility would be to allow coders to engage in multiple coding, or the assigning of a story to several frames. This approach presents some difficulties in analyzing data and in computing reliability coefficients, however. An editorial column in our sample of editorials argued that many people hold a "middle ground" position on abortion that is pro-choice but anti-abortion. Perhaps a frame should be added to deal with this possibility.

Framing appears to be emerging as such an important concept in news studies that some effective method of measuring it needs to be found. This paper has attempted to demonstrate that need and assess several methods that might be used to meet it.

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FIGURE 1

| | ABORTION | MOVEMENTS | LIFE | CHOICE | FRAMING MECHANISMS |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ABORTION NOT GENERALLY ACCEPTABLE | **(Anti) Abortion**<br>THIS FRAME DEFINES THE ISSUE AS ABORTION AND THEN ARGUES AGAINST ABORTION.<br>-ref. to abortion as a "business"<br>-argument that abortion is anti-family<br>-argument that abortion painful to unborn child<br>-argument that abortion is degrading to women or has negative psychological consequences for women<br>-abortion as something men do to women<br>-playing up high number of abortions done<br>-explicit descriptions or photos of medical procedures | **(Anti) Pro-Abortion**<br>THIS FRAME TAKES THE ARGUMENTS OF THE PRO-ABORTION MOVEMENT AND ARGUES AGAINST THEM.<br>-use of the term "pro-abortion"<br>-ref. to pro-abortion as minority<br>-argument against abortion as birth control<br>-negative reference to pro-abortion movement<br>-criticism or negative reference to terms such as "embryo," "fetus," "fertilized egg," or "tissue," rather than "baby" or "unborn child" | **(Pro) Life**<br>THIS FRAME DEFINES THE ISSUE AS THE RIGHT TO LIFE OF THE UNBORN CHILD AND THEN ARGUES FOR THAT RIGHT.<br>-use of terms or phrases such as: pro-life, right to life, unborn child<br>-argument that life begins at conception<br>-argument for social support for pregnant women<br>-ref. to adoption as alternative<br>-use of terms such as "murder" or "child killing" | | -headlines & kickers<br>-subheads<br>-photographs<br>-photo captions<br>-leads<br>-sources and affiliations<br>-selection of quotes<br>-pull quotes (blown up for emphasis)<br>-logos<br>-statistics/ charts & graphs<br>-concluding statement |
| ABORTION GENERALLY ACCEPTABLE | **(Pro) Abortion**<br>THIS FRAME DEFINES THE ISSUE AS ABORTION AND THEN ARGUES FOR ABORTION.<br>-use of terms such as "embryo," "fetus," "fertilized egg," or "tissue," rather than "baby" or "unborn child"<br>-ref. (pos. or neutral) to abortion as birth control/fertility control/ population control<br>-argument that cost for care of unwanted children is too high<br>-ref. to pregnancy as an inconvenience or a mistake<br>-ref. to abortion as safe and easy | **(Anti) Anti-Abortion**<br>THIS FRAME TAKES THE ARGUMENTS OF THE ANTI-ABORTION MOVEMENT AND ARGUES AGAINST THEM.<br>-use of the term "anti-abortion" in a ridiculing or negative way<br>-negative references to anti-abortionists<br>-argument that all anti-abortionists are religious fundamentalists<br>-ref. to anti-abortion laws as dangerous or argument that laws restricting abortion kill<br>-ref. to anti-abortion as minority | | **(Pro) Choice**<br>THIS FRAME DEFINES THE ISSUE AS THE WOMAN'S RIGHT TO CHOOSE ABORTION AND THEN ARGUES FOR THAT RIGHT.<br>-use of terms or phrases such as: pro-choice, abortion rights, women's rights<br>-argument for separation of church and state<br>-argument for keeping legislators/government out of personal lives | |

# The Impact of Prior Beliefs and Disclosure of Methods on Perceptions of Poll Data Quality and Methodological Discounting

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The use of public opinion polling as a news-gathering tool has gained widespread acceptance in the journalistic community (Ismach, 1984; Atkin and Gaudino, 1984). More than one-third of the nation's daily newspapers have either conducted an opinion poll to gather information for stories (Demers, 1988b; Demers, 1987; Rippey, 1980) or currently conduct or sponsor political polls during election campaigns (Holley, 1991). The three television networks have also established their own polling operations: CBS in 1967, NBC in 1973, and ABC in 1981 (Sudman, 1983).

The widespread use of polls by the media has caused some concern about whether the media are meeting their obligation of making available the necessary methodological information when reporting poll results (e.g., Holley, 1991; Miller, Merkle and Wang, 1991; Crespi, 1989:111-4; Asher, 1988:78-83). Professional associations such as the 'American Association for Public Opinion Research' (AAPOR) and the 'National Council on Public Polls' (NCPP) have established standards of disclosure which are to serve as guidelines for those reporting survey results (Miller, Merkle and Wang, 1991; Turner and Martin, 1984).

Since polls can be conducted for any number of purposes, with varying demands for accuracy, the methods employed can vary widely. Therefore, those who call for the disclosure of methodological information do so on the basis that it will enable the poll consumer

NOTE: The author wishes to thank Peter V. Miller, Michael E. Roloff and Susan Herbst for their helpful comments. Also, footnotes are located at the end of this paper and are marked in the text with the abbreviation FN in parentheses. For example, footnote 1 is marked as (FN1), etc.

to make informed judgments concerning the quality of the poll (e.g., Traugott and Rusch, 1989:16; Salwen, 1985:276; Turner and Martin, 1984:69). This practice shifts the responsibility for data quality from the pollster to the poll consumer (Miller, Merkle and Wang, 1991).

For this method of policing data quality to be effective the media must follow the suggestions of AAPOR and NCPP and disclose the necessary information. A number of studies have content analyzed media poll reports in order to assess their compliance with all or part of the disclosure codes (FN1). Even though the results of these studies are based on different types of media samples (and given a variance in coding instructions), we can draw some tentative conclusions about the level of disclosure in media poll stories.

Most of these disclosure studies conclude that, overall, media reports of polls are deficient when it comes to presenting information suggested by the codes of disclosure. But the results also indicate that some methodological details are reported more often than others. Information that is disclosed relatively often includes sample size, the population to be represented, and the poll sponsor. Items receiving a moderate level of disclosure are timing of the interviews and method of data collection. A number of other factors are reported less often. These include sampling error, question wording, response rate, nonsampling error, and sample selection procedure.

In addition to the specific findings concerning the level of disclosure for each of the methodological items, these content analyses have produced some general findings as well. For example, the disclosure studies have found greater conformity to AAPOR's disclosure standards for election polls than for nonelection polls (Miller and Hurd, 1982), significantly higher levels of disclosure for newspaper-sponsored polls than for polls provided by wire services, syndicators and other external sources (Salwen, 1985b; Miller and Hurd, 1982), an increase in the amount of disclosure in each presidential election year from 1968 to 1984 (Salwen, 1985b), but no increase in disclosure from 1972 through 1979 after controlling for election year polls (Miller and Hurd, 1982), greater disclosure in newspaper poll stories than in television poll stories (Paletz et al., 1980), greater conformity to NCPP's guidelines than to AAPOR's guidelines (Merkle, 1989), and no increase in the level of disclosure (except for sampling error) as presidential election-day approaches (Salwen, 1985a).

## Research on Public Perceptions of Poll Results

In light of all these studies on the disclosure of methodological information, as well as the number of studies on the effects of reporting poll results on the public's attitudes and behavior (See Merkle, 1991a for a review of bandwagon and underdog research), it is surprising that there has been little systematic research about the public's perceptions or interpretations of poll results (Koch, 1985:36). This is the case even though there have been a number of suggestions to move beyond content analysis to look at poll consumers' perceptions and interpretations (e.g., Weiss and Singer, 1988:17; Milavsky, 1987:443; Salwen, 1985b:277; Turner and Martin, 1984:329-30).

There have been only three studies looking at poll consumers' perceptions of poll data quality or poll credibility. Koch (1985) used 60 participants in 11 focus groups to explore individuals' perceptions and understanding of poll results. The focus groups discussed nine types of polls that varied in the way they were conducted and the amount of methodological information presented.

Although there are problems with the internal and external validity of this type of investigation (See Cook and Campbell, 1979), some of the findings are informative. First, only a small number of the participants were able to critically evaluate the poll results by raising relevant methodological issues. Second, poll results that contradicted previous attitudes or experiences tended to be viewed as less credible. Third, Koch concluded that "it appears the inclusion of methodological information would give the impression that the poll results were credible, or at least relatively more credible than the others that lacked such information" (p. 96).

Another study conducted by Mosier and Ahlgren (1981) used an experimental design to assess the perceived credibility of three types of newspaper articles: a "precision" news article (written using proper precision journalism techniques), a "pseudo-precision" news article (written using improper precision techniques), and a "traditional" news article (written using traditional news reporting techniques). Contrary to the authors' expectations, the results of the study indicated that news articles using precision journalism techniques were perceived as no more credible than the traditional news articles. Also, news articles that used precision techniques properly were seen as no more credible than articles using precision techniques improperly. "Indeed, no particular mode [of presentation] was consistently rated higher than the other" (p. 381).

Salwen (1987) also used an experimental design to study three variables that were hypothesized to be related to perceptions of credibility in newspaper polls: the source of the poll (either the newspaper itself, Gallup, or a survey research firm hired by one of the candidates in a hypothetical election), source intent, and whether the poll used probability sampling. There were no significant differences between the three source conditions. The use of probability sampling procedures did have a significant impact on perceptions of poll credibility along the dimensions of trustworthiness, expertise, and objectivity, but not clarity. Finally, "the bad [source] intent condition, where the pollster hired by the candidate predicted that his candidate was winning, was judged significantly less objective than both the neutral and good intent conditions" (p. 819), but there were no significant differences between the good and neutral source intent conditions.

The experimental studies by Mosier and Ahlgren (1981) and Salwen (1987) both implicitly tested the notion that poll consumers can rationally evaluate poll stories based on the information presented in them. This ability to detect bias or potential bias in poll stories is necessary if the disclosure of methodological information is to be useful to poll consumers. This paper explores this and other questions by reporting the results of an experimental study designed to look at various factors that are hypothesized to have an impact on poll consumers' perceptions of poll data quality for a given poll. This study considers such factors as the level and type of methodological disclosure, prior beliefs, level of methodological discounting, and general attitudes toward public opinion polling.

## Hypotheses (FN2)

### Level and Type of Disclosure

Hypothesis 1: The level (i.e., amount) and type (i.e., the actual methods used) of disclosure will affect the level of methodological discounting. More specifically, it is hypothesized that the level of methodological discounting will be greatest for a poll employing "nonstandard" data collection techniques with disclosure ('disclosure, nonstandard'), followed by a poll employing "standard" data collection techniques with disclosure ('disclosure, standard"), followed by a poll that discloses no methodological information ('no disclosure').

Hypothesis 2: The level and type of disclosure will affect perceptions of poll data quality. More specifically, it is hypothesized that perceptions of poll data quality will be greatest in the 'disclosure, standard' condition followed by the 'no disclosure' condition, followed by the 'disclosure, nonstandard' condition.

Hypotheses 1 and 2 suggest that poll consumers will use the information presented with the poll results when evaluating the quality of that poll. Attribution research in social psychology suggests that individuals make use of their prior knowledge or expectations to detect biases in messages. Two types of biases have been studied: "knowledge bias" and "reporting bias" (Eagly, Wood and Chaiken, 1978). A message source is thought to be exhibiting "knowledge bias" when the information presented is seen as limited, incorrect or unrepresentative. "Reporting bias" is thought to be operating when the message source has a vested interest in the topic and is perceived to be withholding or distorting relevant information. For example Wood and Eagly (1981) found that a communicator was perceived as being more biased when his/her stand on an issue was attributed to personal background characteristics and was perceived as being less biased when his/her position was attributed to knowledge of factual evidence. Wood and Eagly (1981) also found some support for their prediction that perceived communicator bias in a persuasion situation is positively related to message scrutiny. They found stronger support for their prediction of a negative relationship between perceived communicator bias and opinion change.

Second-guessing theory also proposes that individuals have the ability to detect biases in messages if they are motivated to do so (Hewes and Graham, 1989). Hewes and Graham (1989) outline a number of message cues that can initiate second-guessing, including source cues that are similar to the "knowledge" and "reporting biases" just mentioned. For example, second-guessing is prompted if the source is seen to be distorting information for his/her own benefit or if he/she does not have sufficient data to draw accurate conclusions. Based on this discussion of how individuals infer biases in messages, it is likely that the reportage of poll methodology may serve to trigger questions in some poll consumers' minds concerning potential biases which could lead some poll consumers to discount the poll results and view them as unreliable.

The specific predictions under Hypothesis 1 suggest that the presence of methodological information will give the poll consumer more of an opportunity to point out potential biases or problems than if no methodological information is presented. The level of discounting is expected to be highest in the 'disclosure, nonstandard' condition given the overall problematic nature of the methods employed.

The specific predictions under Hypothesis 2 suggest that the level and type of disclosure will also have an impact on poll consumers' perceptions of poll data quality. The perceived quality of the poll that discloses no information ('no disclosure') is hypothesized to fall between the other two polls ('disclosure, standard' and 'disclosure, nonstandard') even though the level of discounting is hypothesized to be lowest in the 'no disclosure' condition. This is expected since individuals can still infer bias, even without discounting the specific methods employed, by being sceptical of a poll simply because it has absolutely no documentation. Perceptions of poll data quality are hypothesized to be the most positive in the 'disclosure, standard' condition because of the tendency for people to believe poll results more when methodological information is presented (Koch, 1985). And, more generally, research evidence is more persuasive when information about the procedures used to collect the data is presented along with the research results (Reinard, 1988:24). This, of course, assumes that the research methods employed do not seem overtly biased or flawed. When the methods are overtly problematic, as in the 'disclosure, nonstandard' condition, we would expect the perceived quality of the poll to be quite low due to the high levels of methodological discounting.

Prior Beliefs

Hypothesis 3: Poll results that are inconsistent with prior beliefs will lead to a greater level of methodological discounting than poll results that are consistent with prior beliefs.

Hypothesis 4: Poll results that are inconsistent with prior beliefs will lead to lower perceptions of poll data quality than poll results that are consistent with prior beliefs.

The picture of active poll information processing presented under hypotheses 1 and 2 probably doesn't provide a complete picture of how individuals process the results of public opinion polls. While message receivers may have the potential to detect biases in messages, they are not always motivated to use it. For example, Roloff (1989) suggests that individuals may be motivated to second-guess the accuracy of messages that are inconsistent with their beliefs to a greater extent than messages that are consistent with their beliefs. Roloff (1989) cites the results of persuasion research which finds that more unfavorable cognitive responses are generated by individuals who are exposed to counterattitudinal messages than by individuals exposed to proattitudinal messages (e.g., Howard-Pitney, Borgida and Omoto, 1986; Petty and Cacioppo, 1979: Study 1; Cacioppo and Petty, 1979a: Study 2; Cacioppo and Petty, 1979b).

Research on social judgment also indicates that people tend to evaluate information that is inconsistent with their prior beliefs more critically than information that is consistent with their prior beliefs (Nisbett and Ross, 1980: Chapters 4 and 8; Ross, 1977; Hogarth, 1980). "New evidence appears reliable and informative if it is consistent with one's initial belief, whereas contrary evidence is dismissed as unreliable, erroneous, or unrepresentative (Slovic, Fischhoff and Lichtenstein, 1980:189).

For example, Lord, Ross and Lepper (1979) found that empirical evidence that was consistent with existing attitudes was accepted at "face value," while evidence that was inconsistent with existing attitudes was evaluated more critically and discounted. Two studies by Houston and Fazio (1989) provide further evidence for this phenomenon, especially in situations where the attitude in question is salient. They state: "Information consistent with the attitude is evaluated as more correctly obtained and more convincing, while inconsistent information is dismissed as invalidly obtained and unconvincing" (p. 64). Lord, Lepper and Preston (1984) replicated this result in a situation where subjects were explicitly instructed to "be unbiased" when evaluating the empirical evidence. The effect was not replicated in a condition where subjects were asked to consider whether they would have reached the same conclusions if the empirical evidence they were evaluating supported the opposite position.

Similarly, research also suggests that selective perception, which is the "tendency to interpret a message in terms of prior attitudes and experience" (Rogers and Storey, 1987: 827), is one factor that mediates mass communication effects (Klapper, 1960). Mass communication researchers have found selective perception to operate in reactions to political TV commercials (Donohue, 1973-74), perceptions of news bias (Stevenson and Greene, 1980), judgments of debate winners (Sigelman and Sigelman, 1984; Rouner and Perloff, 1987; Fazio and Williams, 1986), reactions toward prejudiced characters in the media (Cooper and Jahoda, 1947; Vidmar and Rokeach, 1974; Brighan and Giesbrecht, 1976; Wilhoit and DeBock; 1976) and assessments of sporting events (Hastorf and Cantril, 1954). This research indicates that message processing entails more than just the rational consideration of the information presented in the message.

From this discussion it is clear that poll consumers' prior beliefs, in addition to the methodological information presented, must be taken into account when discussing how judgments of poll data quality are formed for a given poll. In the two experimental studies mentioned above (Salwen, 1987; Mosier and Ahlgren, 1981) prior beliefs were not included in the design.

### Level of Methodological Discounting

Hypothesis 5: The level of methodological discounting will be negatively related to perceptions of poll data quality.

The cognitive response perspective in persuasion suggests that message persuasiveness is influenced by the thoughts generated by the message receiver (Greenwald, 1968; Perloff and Brock, 1980). In support of this perspective, research finds that subjects' postmessage attitudes are correlated with cognitive responses elicited by the persuasive message (e.g., Wood, 1982; Petty and Cacioppo, 1979: Study 2; Love and Greenwald, 1978; Calder, Insko and Yandell, 1974). Although the dependent variable in the present study is not attitude change, this research suggests that the level of methodological discounting will be negatively related to subjects' perceptions of poll data quality. It is expected that increased discounting will make subjects less likely to accept the poll results as an accurate representation of public opinion. Therefore, as poll consumers detect potential bias and discount a poll's methodology, we would expect them to become less likely to accept the results.

## General Attitude Toward Polling

Hypothesis 6: General attitudes toward public opinion polling will be positively related to perceptions of poll data quality for any specific set of poll results.

Another factor, besides the information presented with the poll and the subjects' prior beliefs, that may influence someone's judgment of poll data quality for any particular poll is his/her general attitude toward public opinion polling. Public opinion polls tend to find that most people think polls are at least somewhat accurate, although some respondents do not put much credence in poll results (e.g., Hastings and Hastings, 1984:304; Roper, 1986). It is suggested that if someone has a favorable attitude toward polling in general, he/she will evaluate any particular poll more favorably, on average, than someone with an unfavorable attitude toward polling.

## Methods

To test the above hypotheses, subjects were asked to evaluate one of six poll reports purporting to measure public opinion on the abortion issue in the United States. This topic was selected for a number of reasons. First, since abortion is likely to be a salient issue for the subjects in this study, they are likely to have well formed attitudes and beliefs on this issue (Snyder, 1985: Chapter 5; Petty and Cacioppo, 1981). This is necessary to test the notion that poll consumers process poll results in a manner that is consistent with their prior beliefs. Second, abortion was thought to be a highly involving issue for these subjects. Scrutiny of message content is likely to be greater for highly involving issues (Petty and Cacioppo, 1981; Petty and Cacioppo, 1986a; Petty and Cacioppo, 1986b). Third, abortion polls traditionally receive a great deal of attention in the mass media (Bennett, 1990). Fourth, the mass media present divergent pictures of the distribution of opinion on this issue (Snyder, 1985).

### Sample

The original sample for this study consisted of 130 undergraduate students in introductory Communication Studies courses at Northwestern University who expressed pro-choice attitudes on the abortion issue. The sample included 75 females and 55 males. Most students received extra credit for participating in this study. One hundred and twelve (66 females and 46 males) of the original 130 subjects completed both the pretest and posttest questionnaires. The distributions of males and females in each of the six experimental conditions were very similar.

Mortality was approximately equally distributed across the six experimental conditions. The lack of differential loss suggests that subject attrition did not seriously threaten the internal validity of the experiment. Devine and Cook (1983) consider the internal validity of an experiment to be high if overall attrition is less than 15 percent and the difference in attrition between conditions is less than 10 percent. Both of these conditions are met here.

### Procedure

Subjects completed an in-class questionnaire that asked about attitudes on issues that are periodically reported on in the mass media. Included in the survey were attitude questions on public opinion polling, gun control, abortion, drug legalization, and the death penalty. The question of interest was the one asking about attitudes on abortion (FN3). In response to the abortion question, 130 respondents expressed pro-choice views while 22 expressed pro-life views and two expressed no opinion. The small number of subjects expressing a pro-life position made it difficult to build a comparison between pro-choice and pro-life subjects into the design (FN4). Therefore, only pro-choice subjects (n=130) were selected to test the hypothesized relationships presented above.

After the initial survey, subjects were randomly assigned to one of six experimental conditions as indicated by the 3 X 2 factoral design below:

| | Poll results consistent with prior beliefs | Poll results inconsistent with prior beliefs |
|---|---|---|
| Disclosure, standard methodology | n=19 | n=19 |
| No disclosure | n=20 | n=18 |
| Disclosure, nonstandard methodology | n=17 | n=19 |

One week after the initial questionnaire, the subjects were asked to fill out a second survey. As part of this survey the subjects read a poll story on the abortion issue. They then completed a thought-listing exercise and filled out a set of semantic differential scales.

Operationalizations: Independent Variables

Level and type of disclosure. The first independent variable, which varied the level and type of disclosure, was operationalized by using three conditions. The first condition ('disclosure, standard') consisted of poll results collected using "standard" methodology with disclosure. The results presented in this condition were similar to many polls reported in the media. There was no clear indication of biases or methodological flaws. The information presented with the poll results was worded as follows: "The poll was conducted by the New York Times and is based on telephone interviews conducted from May 1 to May 4 [dates corresponding to the time period in which the experimental study was conducted] with 1,532 randomly selected adults (18 and over) from across the United States. The response rate was 90%. The margin of error for this survey is 3 percent in either direction." In addition, the question wording was presented: "If a woman wants to have an abortion and her doctor agrees to it, should she be allowed to have an abortion or not?"

The second condition ('no disclosure') reported the same poll results as the first condition, but no methodological information was presented. This condition was typical of many media poll reports that present only the marginals without any background information. The third condition ('disclosure, nonstandard') presented the same poll results but reported the "nonstandard" methodology that was used to conduct the poll. This condition provided a deliberate contrast to the types of polls that are typically reported in the media. The information presented hinted at potential biases as well as methodological flaws. The information presented with the poll results in this condition read as follows: "The poll was conducted by Planned Parenthood which conducted 250 in-person interviews with shoppers in downtown New York on December 12, 1989. No margin of error was released with the poll but it could be as high as 10 percent in either direction." Question wording was also presented: "There are a number of reasons that a woman can have for obtaining an abortion. For example, a woman may obtain an abortion if her life is in danger or if she is a victim of rape or incest, among other reasons. Do you think it should be legal for a woman to obtain an abortion in some of these circumstances?" (FN5).

All polls purported to measure the same phenomenon and were presented as Associated Press wire service stories.

Consistency with prior beliefs. The consistency between prior beliefs and the poll results was manipulated by randomly assigning subjects to one of two groups. In the "consistent" group, subjects were presented with poll results supporting the conclusion that the "majority of Americans support legalized abortion" (52% to 42% with 6% undecided). In the "inconsistent" group, subjects were presented with poll results that supported the conclusion that the "majority of Americans do not support legalized abortion" (again, 52% to 42% with 6% undecided).

Since the subjects in this study were pro-choice, we can see that the results of the polls in each of the two conditions were either consistent or inconsistent with their beliefs on the abortion issue. In addition, the majority of the subjects in this study (88.2%) thought that most people in the United States agreed with them on this issue (FN6). There are two reasons for this. First, research finds a strong tendency for people to perceive that their preferences are more common and shared by others than are alternative preferences (Mullen and Hu, 1988; Mullen et al., 1985). This well-documented phenomenon is called the false consensus effect. Second, two polls taken by the Gallup organization about a month before this experimental study was conducted found a shift toward greater support of the pro-choice position (Gallup and Newport, 1990). Therefore, it is not surprising that the subjects in this study perceived the climate of opinion to be consistent with their views on abortion.

General attitude toward polling. General attitude toward public opinion polling was computed from four questions asked on the first survey. Subjects were asked: "In general, how (believable, accurate, informative) are the results of public opinion polls that report how Americans feel about issues of the day?", and "Generally, how interested are you in the results of public opinion polls that report how Americans feel about issues of the day?" The responses to these questions ranged from one to seven. High values corresponded to positive attitudes toward public opinion polling. The four scales were summed and then divided by four to create the aggregate measure. The internal consistency of this index, measured by Cronbach's Alpha, was 0.71.

### Operationalizations: Dependent Variables

Methodological discounting. After reading their assigned poll report, subjects were given these instructions:

> Please spend the next few minutes listing all thoughts you have about the poll results you have just read. You might have ideas all favorable to the poll, all opposed, all irrelevant to the poll, or a mixture of the three. Any case is fine; simply list your thoughts about the poll. The next page contains the form we have prepared

> for you to use to record your thoughts and ideas. Simply write down the first idea you have on the first line, the second idea on the second line, etc. Please put only one idea per line. State your thoughts and ideas as concisely as possible . . . a phrase is sufficient. IGNORE SPELLING, GRAMMAR, AND PUNCTUATION. We have deliberately provided more space than we think most people will need to insure that everyone would have plenty of room. So don't worry if you don't fill every space. Just write down whatever thoughts you have about the poll results. (You may refer back to the previous page if you wish.) Thank you.

Responses to this thought-listing exercise were independently coded by two individuals and were classified along two dimensions. First, the statement was classified as either referring to the poll's methodology (as suggested by AAPOR's disclosure code) or not. Then each statement was classified in terms of its evaluative nature. Statements were coded as being either positive (supportive of the methodological information - e.g., "The sample size was appropriate"), negative (critical of the methodological information - e.g., "The sample size was too small"), neutral (nonevaluative statement - e.g.,, "The sample size was 1,532) or asking a question (e.g., "What was the sample size?").

Cohen's kappa was used to assess inter-coder reliability (Bakeman and Gottman, 1986) (FN7). Kappa was computed three ways. First, the reliability for classifying the statement as either referring to the poll's methodology or not was 0.95. Second, the reliability for coding the evaluative nature of the statement was 0.94. Finally, the overall reliability (taking into account both types of coding classifications) was 0.92.

A measure of level of methodological discounting was computed by summing all the negative evaluations of the poll's methodology for each subject and then subtracting any positive evaluations from it, yielding a measure of net methodological discounting.

Perception of poll data quality. Perception of poll data quality is an overall judgment about the willingness to accept the poll results as an accurate representation of public opinion. A measure of this variable was created by combining responses to eight semantic differential scales which asked the respondent to evaluate the poll results in terms of reliability, objectivity, credibility, completeness, believability, accuracy, bias, and confidence that the results are representative. The values on the scales ranged from one to seven. High values corresponded to positive evaluations of poll data quality. The eight scales were summed and then divided by eight to create the aggregate measure. The internal consistency of this index, measured by Cronbach's Alpha, was 0.90.

## Results

This section presents the results of the experiment. First, tests of each of the six hypotheses will be discussed. Then as a further test, all independent variables from this study (disclosure, prior beliefs, level of discounting, and general attitude toward polling) will be used in a multiple regression analysis to provide a more complete assessment of the various factors that impact on poll consumers' perceptions of poll data quality.

### Hypotheses 1 and 3 (FN8)

A two-way analysis of variance (disclosure X prior beliefs) on level of discounting yielded a main effect of disclosure, $F(2, 106) = 27.65$, $p < .0001$, as well as a main effect of prior beliefs, $F(1, 106) = 5.97$, $p = .016$ (See Table 1) (FN9). There was not a significant interaction effect. Figure 1 presents a graph of the means for each of the six experimental conditions.

TABLE 1 AND FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE

The results of this ANOVA provide support for Hypothesis 1 which predicted that the level and type of disclosure would affect the level of methodological discounting. The means graphed in Figure 1 and the analyses in Tables 3 and 4 (FN10) provide support for the specific predictions under Hypothesis 1. The level of discounting was highest for the 'disclosure, nonstandard' condition, followed by 'disclosure, standard' and then the 'no disclosure' condition (FN11). This was expected since presenting the poll's methodology gives the poll consumer more of a chance to point out potential biases or problems with the methodological decisions than if no methodological information is presented. As expected level of discounting was highest in the 'disclosure nonstandard' condition, given the overall problematic nature of the methods employed.

Also, the main effect for 'prior beliefs' in the ANOVA supports Hypothesis 3 which predicted higher levels of discounting in the belief-inconsistent condition than in the belief-consistent condition. This was expected since people tend to evaluate empirical evidence that is inconsistent with their prior beliefs more critically than they evaluate evidence that is consistent with their prior beliefs (e.g., Houston and Fazio, 1989; Lord, Ross and Lepper, 1979; Lord, Lepper and Preston, 1984).

Hypotheses 2 and 4

A two-way analysis of variance (disclosure X prior beliefs) on perceptions of poll data quality was conducted to test hypotheses 2 and 4. The results in Table 5 show main effects of disclosure, F (2, 106) = 6.97, p = .001, and of prior beliefs, F (1, 106) = 23.29, p < .0001 (FN12). There was not a significant interaction effect. Figure 2 presents a graph of the means for each of the six experimental conditions.

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TABLE 5 AND FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE

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The results of this ANOVA provide support for Hypothesis 2 which predicted that the level and type of disclosure would affect perceptions of poll data quality. Figure 2 and the analyses in Tables 7 and 8 (FN13) provide support for the specific predictions under Hypothesis 2. Perceptions of poll data quality were greatest for the 'disclosure, standard' condition followed by 'no disclosure,' and then the 'disclosure, nonstandard' condition.

In the ANOVA, the main effect for 'prior beliefs' provides support for Hypothesis 4. The subjects in this study were more willing to accept poll results that were consistent with their prior beliefs than poll results that were inconsistent with their prior beliefs.

Hypothesis 5

This hypothesis predicted that the level of methodological discounting would be negatively related to perceptions of poll data quality. It was expected that an increase in discounting would make one less likely to accept the poll results as an accurate representation of public opinion. Therefore, as poll consumers detect potential bias and discount a poll's methodology, we would expect them to become less likely to accept the results. The zero-order correlation between the level of methodological discounting and perceptions of poll data quality was computed ($r = -.40$, $p < .0001$, one-tailed) and provides support for this hypothesis.

Hypothesis 6

The sixth hypothesis predicted that general attitudes toward public opinion polling would be positively related to perceptions of poll data quality for any specific set of poll results. It was expected that someone with a more favorable attitude toward polling in general would evaluate any particular poll more favorably, on average, than someone with an unfavorable attitude toward polling. A zero-order correlation was computed and indicates that there is a positive relationship between these two variables, thus supporting the hypothesis ($r = .18$, $p = .03$, one-tailed).

Multiple Regression (FN14)

The independent variables from this study (disclosure, prior beliefs, level of discounting, and general attitude toward polling) were used in a multiple regression analysis to predict perceptions of poll data quality. Since disclosure consisted of three conditions in the experiment, which could not be represented as a single independent variable, orthogonal polynomial coefficients were utilized as described by Cohen and Cohen (1983:242-52). Orthogonal polynomials make it possible to create independent variables that represent possible trends (e.g., linear, quadratic) in the data

(Hays, 1988:706-11). Table 9 presents the orthogonal polynomial coefficients used in the multiple regression. Contrast 1 represents the linear relationship that is of interest here. In other words, perceived poll data quality was hypothesized to be greatest in the 'disclosure standard' condition followed by 'no disclosure' and then the 'disclosure, nonstandard' condition. Contrast 2, which represents a quadratic relationship, is included because of the need for two contrast variables (number of groups minus 1) that are orthogonal. Contrast 2 is not expected to be significantly related to perceptions of poll data quality.

TABLE 9 ABOUT HERE

The prior beliefs variable is dummy coded as 1 = consistent with prior beliefs, 0 = inconsistent with prior beliefs. The other three variables (level of discounting, general attitude toward polling and perceptions of poll data quality) were measured as described above.

The regression results indicate that all four independent variables are significantly related to perceptions of poll data quality (See Table 10). This analysis provides further support for each of the main hypotheses presented above even after controlling for the effects of the other independent variables. The best predictor of perceived poll data quality is prior beliefs (Beta = .37, $p < .0001$) followed by level of discounting (Beta = -.29, $p < .01$), general attitude toward polling (Beta = .20, $p < .05$) and disclosure (orthoginal polynomial contrast, Beta = .19, $p < .05$). Approximately one-third of the variance in perceptions of poll data quality in this experiment was explained by the independent variables.

## Discussion

This paper represents a first step in understanding how certain variables impact on perceptions of poll data quality for a given poll. In this study, the level and type of disclosure, as well as prior beliefs, had a significant impact on the level of methodological discounting and perceptions of poll data quality. These experimental results indicate that a poll consumer's evaluation of poll data quality entails more than just a rational consideration of the information presented. While the subjects in this study did scrutinize the methodological details, and they did generate concerns about potential biases in the poll reports, they were less motivated to so when the poll results were consistent with their prior beliefs. In other words, poll results that were consistent with prior beliefs were discounted less and accepted to a greater extent than poll results that were inconsistent with prior beliefs. In addition to the two independent variable manipulations, the level of discounting and general attitudes toward public opinion polling were also reliably related to perceptions of poll data quality.

These results have certain implications for those who report the results of opinion polls. First, disclosing the information suggested by the AAPOR disclosure code (assuming the poll employed "standard" data collection techniques) may prompt poll consumers to evaluate the results more favorably than if the information is not presented. Subjects in this experimental study evaluated a poll that fully disclosed its ("standard") methods more favorably than a poll that didn't disclose any information. As expected, subjects were probably more sceptical of information that was not documented. Secondly, no matter how well conducted a poll is, there will still be those who discount the poll, and the methodology, because it is inconsistent with their prior beliefs. Therefore, in some cases, disclosing the methodology will provide ammunition for those who are unsympathetic to the results and want to discount them. This is consistent with social psychological research which indicates that prior beliefs can have an impact on the way that individuals process empirical information. In fact, our study found prior beliefs to the strongest predictor of perceptions of poll data quality.

Survey researchers who are concerned with how the public views their work may also be interested in the results presented in this study. Milavsky (1987) was addressing the polling community when he stated that "we need to start paying more attention to the public's estimate of the worth of survey research, and to how estimates of that worth are formed. We need to study the image that is projected . . . by the media to see if we can improve that image" (p. 447). This study presents a step in that direction by focusing on how poll consumers make judgments about specific polls. These specific judgments may influence more general attitudes toward survey research.

Finally, the results of our laboratory experiment also have certain implications for those who study the bandwagon and underdog effects of polls. An important factor that has been overlooked by researchers who are concerned with the effects of polls on public opinion is the way that poll consumers process the information that they are presented and their perceptions of poll data quality. An implicit assumption in research on the effects of polls is that subjects weight all polls equally and accept the poll results at face value (Merkle, 1991a). The results of this study indicate that this is not necessarily the case.

If public opinion poll results are to produce these types of direct bandwagon or underdog effects on public opinion, at least two conditions must be met. First, the poll results have to present novel information. (If the poll results are consistent with the individual's prior perception of public opinion, the poll results will not cause a bandwagon or underdog effect). Second, if the poll results are inconsistent with prior beliefs, the individual has to believe that the poll results are an accurate representation of public opinion. If the results are discounted, as occurred in the experiment presented here, no poll effects will occur. Only after having accepted the novel poll results as an accurate representation of public opinion will the individual be available for the possibility of either jumping on the "bandwagon" or rooting for the "underdog."

## Limitations and Suggestions for Future Studies

As with all experimental studies, there are limitations to the research presented here that must be acknowledged. This section will explicate some of these limitations by considering Cook and Campbell's (1979) threats to validity.

### Internal Validity

After ascertaining that the various independent and dependent variables in an investigation are related, one must determine if the relationships are causal. This is the main thrust of internal validity (Cook and Campbell, 1979:39). The benefit of conducting a randomized experiment is that it rules out many of the threats to internal validity (Cook and Campbell, 1979:56). Therefore, we can say with some degree of confidence that manipulating the level and type of disclosure and the extent to which poll results were consistent or inconsistent with prior beliefs caused changes in the level of discounting and perceptions of poll data quality. But two of the independent variables used in the multiple regression were not experimentally manipulated: general attitude toward public opinion polling and the level of methodological discounting.

Therefore, we have somewhat less confidence in the casual impact of general attitudes toward polling and level of discounting on perceptions of poll data quality. Even though these two independent variables preceded the dependent variable in time and both are reliably related to the dependent variable, a possible threat that must be considered is that some third variable is the cause of these relationships. For example, some other factor could be causing both the general attitude toward public opinion polling and perceptions of poll data quality. By the same token, the independent variable manipulations (disclosure and prior beliefs) could be having an impact on the level of discounting and perceptions of poll data quality concurrently. But since the subjects were asked to list their thoughts about the poll results prior to the questions assessing their perceptions of poll quality, it is likely that they these thoughts were made quite salient. Therefore, it is plausible that they had some impact on the subsequent evaluations of the poll.

### Construct Validity

Construct validity deals with this question: "Given that the relationship is plausibly causal . . ., what are the particular cause and effect constructs involved in the relationship?" (Cook and Campbell, 1979:39). One threat to construct validity that must be discussed for any experiment is the problem of hypothesis guessing (Cook and Campbell, 1979:66-7). There is always the possibility that the causal construct is characterized by a motivation to give the researcher answers he/she wants instead of by the putative construct.

For three main reasons we feel that hypothesis guessing is not confounding the results. 1) The attitude question of interest on the first questionnaire was asked along with a number of other questions to disguise the purpose of the study. 2) The first questionnaire used to assess the subjects' attitudes was administered at least one week before the second questionnaire, making the attitude questions less salient at the time of the second questionnaire. 3) The level of specificity and complexity built into the hypothesized relationships made them rather difficult to guess (Cook, forthcoming; Cook and Campbell, 1979:66). In the social sciences, it is desirable to strive for causal hypotheses that are complex rather than simple because it makes alternative explanations less plausible. (Cook, forthcoming; Cook and Campbell, 1979). For example, in the two ANOVAs, different between condition effects were hypothesized for two different dependent variables (level of discounting and perceptions of poll data quality).

Another threat to construct validity concerns the prior beliefs manipulation. Subjects were assigned to the consistent or inconsistent group based on their prior attitude toward abortion. As it turned out, most of the subjects also felt that their view was consistent with majority opinion. Therefore, from this manipulation, it is not clear if the causal component of the construct is prior attitudes, prior perceptions of public opinion or a combination of both of these factors.

A recent study conducted by the author (Merkle, 1991b) provides insight into this question. As part of a general population survey (consisting of a probability sample of 1,027 adults in the Chicago area), respondents were asked for their attitude on abortion and later in the questionnaire were asked to make a judgment about the accuracy of a poll on abortion. Subjects were randomly assigned to one of two conditions in which they were told about a poll that found the majority either supporting or opposing a woman's right to obtain a legal abortion. For both pro-life and pro-choice respondents, the poll was judged to be more accurate when it was consistent with prior attitudes. In addition, the direction of the poll results (majority either supporting or opposing abortion rights) was also related to judgments of poll accuracy. The poll that purportedly found a majority of the respondents supporting abortion rights was rated as slightly more accurate than the poll that purportedly found a majority opposing abortion rights. These results support the conclusion that prior attitudes are a strong predictor of individuals' judgments about the accuracy of an abortion poll; while the direction of the poll results has a marginally significant impact on judgments of poll accuracy.

These results lend support to the claim that the impact of prior beliefs in the experimental study reported in this paper is attributable to the influence of prior attitudes and, to some extent, to prior perceptions of public opinion. Further studies should try to distinguish between these two components. But since prior attitudes have an impact on perceptions of public opinion as demonstrated by the false consensus effect (Mullen and Hu, 1988; Mullen et al., 1985), then it may not be necessary, or even possible, to fully separate these two components.

A question can also be raised about the construct validity of the disclosure manipulations. While the "standard" and "no disclosure" conditions presented poll reports that are similar to what one might normally encounter in the media, one rarely sees a poll that has been conducted as poorly as the one in the "nonstandard" condition. Future studies should use different manipulations of the level and type of disclosure as well other types of polls (i.e., election polls and polls on issues other than abortion).

A final thought about construct validity has to do with the impact that the thought-listing exercise had on the main dependent variable of interest (perceptions of poll data quality). It could be argued that prompting the subjects to critique the poll results was the primary cause of the effects we saw for the dependent variable.

While the level of methodological discounting (computed from the thought-listing exercise) probably did have a causal impact on perceptions of poll data quality, the independent variable manipulations (disclosure and prior beliefs) still had a significant causal impact even after controlling for the level of discounting in the multiple regression. Still, future studies should consider including conditions where subjects are not asked to list their thoughts about the poll results.

### External Validity

The final concern to be addressed deals with the external validity of these findings. External validity refers to the generalizability of the causal relationships to and across persons, settings, and times (Cook and Campbell, 1979:39). Clearly, there is a trade-off between internal validity and external validity when one conducts a laboratory experiment. First, as we attempt to exercise control over our study, we are restricted in the types of subjects who may participate. In this study, the nature of the subjects does not allow us to generalize to other populations. The subjects were college students with pro-choice attitudes on abortion who may have a better understanding of social science research methods than does the average poll consumer. Also the issue of abortion is probably more salient and involving for these subjects than for the average person (Snyder, 1985:Chapter 5). This suggests that motivation to process the information in the poll report was higher than one would expect for a less involving issue (Petty and Cacioppo, 1981; Howard-Pitney, Borgida and Omoto, 1986; Petty and Cacioppo, 1986a; Petty and Cacioppo, 1986b), Secondly, reading a poll story in a laboratory setting is quite different than reading a poll story in the "real" world. Laboratory experiments demonstrate what can happen when the environment is controlled and information is manipulated (Wang, 1987:129). In a laboratory situation subjects are probably more motivated to process the information than they would be normally. Given these conditions, we would argue that the main effects of disclosure are not likely to be generalizable to the average media poll consumer. Instead, the results may be more generalizable to situations where the motivation and ability to process the information are high, although we can not draw any conclusions about situations where motivation and ability are low.

Given these limitations on the generalizability of the findings, future research should be conducted in different settings, with different issues and different types of people. As Cook and Campbell (1979) state: "In the last analysis, external validity - like construct validity - is a matter of replication" (p.78).

### TABLE ONE

### ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE

### LEVEL OF DISCOUNTING
### (DISCLOSURE X PRIOR BELIEF)

| Source of Variation | Sum of Squares | DF | Mean Square | F | Signif of F |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Main Effects | 33.95 | 3 | 11.32 | 20.86 | .000 |
| Disclosure | 30.00 | 2 | 15.00 | 27.65 | .000 |
| Prior Belief | 3.24 | 1 | 3.24 | 5.97 | .016 |
| 2-way Interaction | .73 | 2 | .36 | .67 | .513 |
| Explained | 34.68 | 5 | 6.94 | 12.79 | .000 |
| Residual | 55.88 | 106 | .54 | | |
| Total | 90.56 | 111 | .84 | | |
| n=112 | | | | | |

## TABLE TWO

## CODED GROUP VALUES FOR SETS OF CONTRAST VARIABLES EMPLOYED IN ANALYSIS OF EXPERIMENTAL GROUP DIFFERENCES FOR REGRESSIONS OF METHODOLOGICAL DISCOUNTING

| | Group 1 vs. Group 2 | Additional Required Variable |
|---|---|---|
| Group 1<br>(Disclosure, standard) | 1 | -1/2 |
| Group 2<br>(No disclosure) | -1 | -1/2 |
| Group 3<br>(Disclosure, nonstandard) | 0 | 1 |

| | Group 1 vs. Group 2 | Additional Required Variable |
|---|---|---|
| Group 1<br>(Disclosure, standard) | -1 | 1/2 |
| Group 2<br>(No disclosure) | 0 | -1 |
| Group 3<br>(Disclosure, nonstandard) | 1 | 1/2 |

## TABLE THREE

## REGRESSIONS OF METHODOLOGICAL DISCOUNTING ON EXPERIMENTAL GROUP CONTRASTS

| | Square Root of the Level of Methodological Discounting |
|---|---|
| Contrast:<br>Disclosure, standard vs. No disclosure | .30***<br>(.000) |
| Contrast:<br>Disclosure, nonstandard vs. Disclosure, standard and No disclosure | .50***<br>(.000) |
| n=112 | |

Note: Cell entries for the variables are standardized regression coefficients (BETAs). The values within parentheses represent the p value associated with the t-test for each coefficient. All tests are one-tailed.
*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

### TABLE FOUR

### REGRESSIONS OF METHODOLOGICAL DISCOUNTING ON EXPERIMENTAL GROUP CONTRASTS

| | Square Root of the Level of Methodological Discounting |
|---|---|
| Contrast:<br>Disclosure, nonstandard vs. Disclosure, standard | .28***<br>(.000) |
| Contrast:<br>Disclosure, standard and Disclosure, nonstandard vs. No disclosure | .51***<br>(.000) |
| n=112 | |

Note: Cell entries for the variables are standardized regression coefficients (BETAs). The values within parentheses represent the p value associated with the t-test for each coefficient. All tests are one-tailed.
*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

## TABLE FIVE

## ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE

## PERCEPTIONS OF POLL DATA QUALITY (DISCLOSURE X PRIOR BELIEF)

| Source of Variation | Sum of Squares | DF | Mean Square | F | Signif of F |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Main Effects | 38.83 | 3 | 12.94 | 12.28 | .000 |
| Disclosure | 14.69 | 2 | 7.34 | 6.97 | .001 |
| Prior Belief | 23.29 | 1 | 23.29 | 23.29 | .000 |
| 2-way Interaction | .38 | 2 | .19 | .18 | .836 |
| Explained | 39.21 | 5 | 7.84 | 7.44 | .000 |
| Residual | 111.73 | 106 | 1.05 | | |
| Total | 150.94 | 111 | 1.36 | | |

n=112

## TABLE SIX

## CODED GROUP VALUES FOR SETS OF CONTRAST VARIABLES EMPLOYED IN ANALYSIS OF EXPERIMENTAL GROUP DIFFERENCES FOR REGRESSIONS OF PERCEPTIONS OF POLL DATA QUALITY

| | Group 1 vs. Group 2 | Additional Required Variable |
|---|---|---|
| Group 1 (Disclosure, standard) | 1 | 1/2 |
| Group 2 (No disclosure) | -1 | 1/2 |
| Group 3 (Disclosure, nonstandard) | 0 | -1 |

| | Group 1 vs. Group 2 | Additional Required Variable |
|---|---|---|
| Group 1 (Disclosure, standard) | 0 | 1 |
| Group 2 (No disclosure) | 1 | -1/2 |
| Group 3 (Disclosure, nonstandard) | -1 | -1/2 |

## TABLE SEVEN

## REGRESSIONS OF PERCEPTIONS OF POLL DATA QUALITY ON EXPERIMENTAL GROUP CONTRASTS

| | Perceptions of Poll Data Quality |
|---|---|
| Contrast:<br>Disclosure, standard vs. No disclosure | .15*<br>(.049) |
| Contrast:<br>Disclosure, standard and No disclosure vs. Disclosure, nonstandard | .28**<br>(.001) |
| n=112 | |

Note: Cell entries for the variables are standardized regression coefficients (BETAs). The values within parentheses represent the p value associated with the t-test for each coefficient. All tests are one-tailed.

*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

## TABLE EIGHT

## REGRESSIONS OF PERCEPTIONS OF POLL DATA QUALITY ON EXPERIMENTAL GROUP CONTRASTS

| | Perceptions of Poll Data Quality |
|---|---|
| Contrast:<br>No disclosure vs.<br>vs. Disclosure, nonstandard | .17*<br>(.031) |
| Contrast:<br>Disclosure, standard vs.<br>No disclosure and<br>Disclosure, nonstandard | .28**<br>(.002) |
| n=112 | |

Note: Cell entries for the variables are standardized regression coefficients (BETAs). The values within parentheses represent the p value associated with the t-test for each coefficient. All tests are one-tailed.
*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

## TABLE NINE

## CODED GROUP VALUES FOR SETS OF CONTRAST VARIABLES REPRESENTING COEFFICIENTS OF ORTHOGONAL POLYNOMIALS EMPLOYED IN THE MULTIPLE REGRESSION

| | Contrast 1: Linear Trend | Contrast 2: Additional Required Variable |
|---|---|---|
| Group 1<br>(Disclosure, standard) | 1 | 1 |
| Group 2<br>(No disclosure). | 0 | -2 |
| Group 3<br>(Disclosure, nonstandard) | -1 | 1 |

## TABLE TEN

### REGRESSION OF PERCEPTIONS OF POLL DATA QUALITY ON PRIOR BELIEFS, LEVEL OF DISCOUNTING, LEVEL AND TYPE OF DISCLOSURE, AND GENERAL ATTITUDE TOWARD POLLING

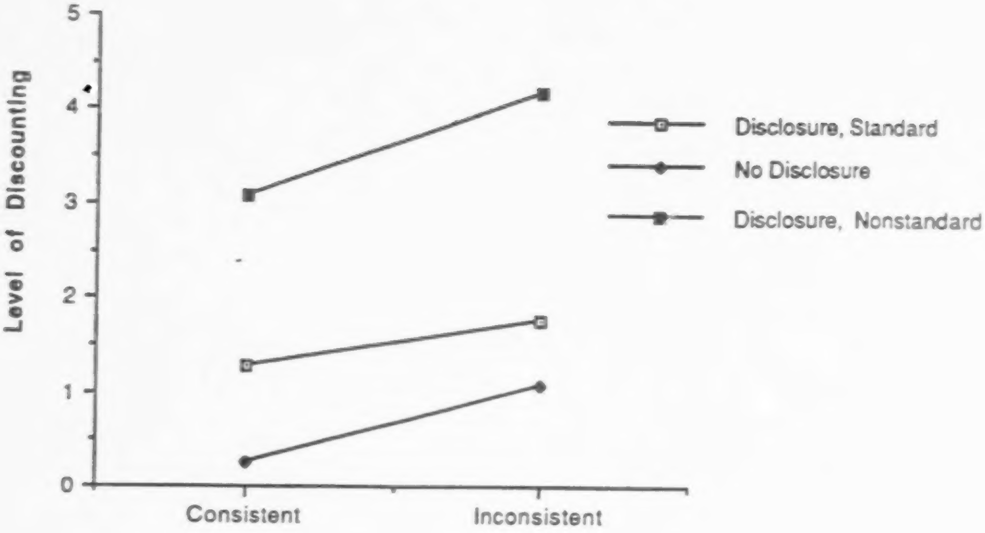
MULTIPLE R = .60
R SQUARE = .36

ADJUSTED R SQUARE = .33
STANDARD ERROR = .96

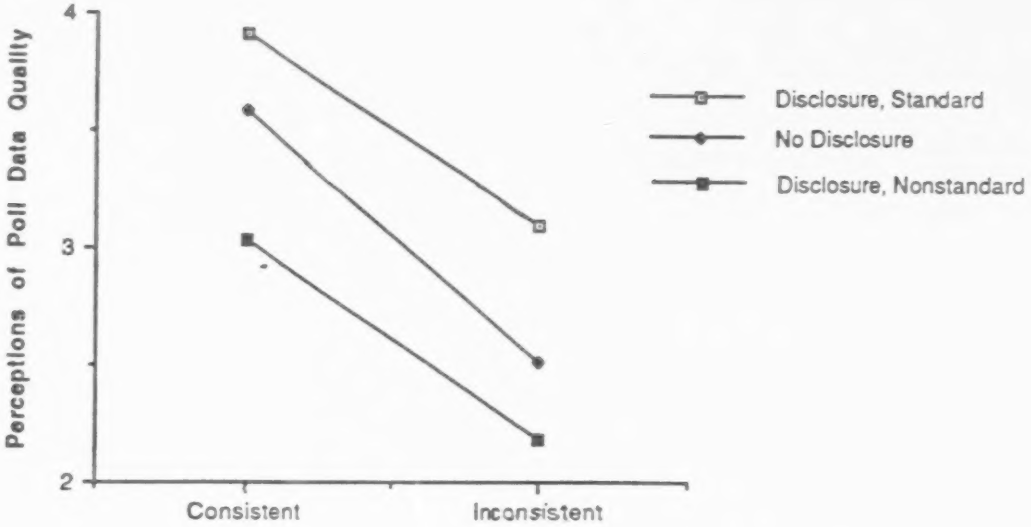
| Independent Variables | B | SE B | BETA | T | SIG T |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Prior Belief | .86 | .19 | .37 | 4.60 | .000 |
| Level of Discounting | -.15 | .05 | -.29 | -3.01 | .003 |
| Attitude Toward Polling | .22 | .09 | .20 | 2.43 | .017 |
| Disclosure: Contrast 1 | .26 | .12 | .18 | 2.13 | .035 |
| Disclosure: Contrast 2 | .07 | .07 | .08 | .93 | .345 |
| (Constant) | 3.73 | .44 |  | 8.43 | .000 |

n=112

Figure 1


Level of Discounting
5
4
3
2
1
0
Consistent
Inconsistent
Disclosure, Standard
No Disclosure
Disclosure, Nonstandard

## Figure 2


4
3
2
Perceptions of Poll Data Quality
Consistent
Inconsistent
Disclosure, Standard
No Disclosure
Disclosure, Nonstandard

# FOOTNOTES

1 These studies include: Auh and Wilhoit, 1973; Cantril and Harris, 1977; Paletz et al., 1980; Miller and Hurd, 1982; Turner and Martin, 1984; Salwen, 1985a; Salwen, 1985b; Weiss and Singer, 1988; Demers, 1988a; Stipp and Townsend, 1989; Weimann, 1990; Miller, Merkle and Wang, 1991.

2 Operationalizations of the independent and dependent variables are presented below.

3 Subjects were asked to respond to this statement: "A pregnant woman should be able to obtain a legal abortion if she so chooses. Do you strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree or have no opinion?"

4 The opinion distributions on gun control, drug legalization and the death penalty were also lopsided.

5 This information was presented with the poll results that concluded that a majority of Americans support legalized abortion. In the condition where the poll results indicated that the majority of Americans do not support legalized abortion, the organization conducting the poll was the Archdiocese of New York and the question wording was: "There are a number of reasons that a woman can have for getting an abortion. For example, a woman may obtain an abortion if she cannot afford to have the baby or if having the baby would interfere with her job, education, or life-style, among other reasons. Do you think it should be legal for a woman to obtain an abortion in all of these circumstances?" Clearly one can raise questions about the objectivity of the organization conducting the survey as well as the question wording in each of the two conditions.

6 This question was asked on the first questionnaire: "Would you say that most people in the Unites States agree or disagree that a pregnant woman should be able to obtain a legal abortion if she so chooses?"

7 Kappa = Po - Pc/1 - Pc. "Po is the proportion of agreement actually observed, whereas Pc is the proportion expected by chance" (Bakeman and Gottman, 1986:78). The measure kappa is preferable to computing a simple agreement percentage because it corrects for chance agreement between the coders.

8 Gender was initially included in the two ANOVAs presented below to explore the possibility of differential effects. There were no effects (main or interaction) for gender, so results are presented as two-way ANOVAs.

9 To test whether the assumption of homogeneity of variance was met in this ANOVA, the Bartlett-Box F statistic was computed for the dependent variable (level of methodological discounting). The F statistic was significant at $p < .001$, indicating that the homogeneity of variance assumption was violated. Since the dependent measure had a positive skew, a square root transformation was conducted to reduce the skew and equalize the variances (Cohen and

Cohen, 1983). The Bartlett F statistic was recomputed and indicated that the homogeneity of variance violation was corrected. This transformed variable is used in the analyses that follow.

10 To determine if the means in the three disclosure conditions were reliably different from each other, contrast coding procedures described by Cohen and Cohen (1983) were used. First, a set of orthogonal variables were created to represent each of the three conditions (See Table 2). According to Cohen and Cohen (1983), two (# of groups minus 1) orthogonal variables are needed to represent the three groups. If group membership is defined in "g-1" variables and the contrasts are orthogonal, then a regression of the dependent variable on the new contrast variables provides a test of the difference between the means represented in the contrasts. Since the tests of differences between the means could not be represented in one set of orthogonal contrasts, two sets of contrasts were created. The results in Tables 3 and 4 indicate that the level of discounting is reliably higher in condition 1 than in condition 2 (p < .0001) and the level of discounting is reliably higher in condition 3 than in condition 1 (p < .0001). By extension, the level of discounting is reliably higher in condition 3 than in condition 2.

11 Although no methods were disclosed in the 'no disclosure' condition, some discounting still did occur. The discounting took the form of criticism of the probable methods (e.g., "the sample size was probably too small").

12 To test whether the assumption of homogeneity of variance was met in this ANOVA, the Bartlett-Box F statistic was computed for the dependent variable (perceptions of poll data quality). The F statistic indicated that the homogeneity of variance assumption was not violated.

13 Contrast codes and regressions similar to those described above were used to test the mean differences between the three disclosure conditions (See Tables 6, 7 and 8). The results indicate that the mean in condition 1 is reliably different than the mean in condition 2 (p < .05) and the mean in condition 2 is reliably different than the mean in condition 3 (p < .05). By extension, the mean in condition 1 is reliably different than the mean in condition 3.

14 An examination of the residuals indicated that the assumptions of linearity, homogeneity of variance and normality were met.

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QUALITATIVE STUDIES
STUDENT

# WORLD WITHOUT REBELLION: LIFE OF THE WORKING-CLASS WOMEN IN POPULAR CULTURE

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In this paper I will examine stories of 1955 *True Story* magazine, one of women's confession magazines and women's use of them with the purpose of exploring a supposedly working class world and the image of women represented in this working-class oriented magazine. Betty Friedan and many other social historians claim that the common image of women of the 1950s was one of mother-housewife. Social historians and a few feminist writers have done surveys of family life in the 1950s (Davidson & Lytle, 1986; Friedan, 1963; Goldman, 1956; Hodgson, 1976; Jackson, 1985; May, 1988). Their survey of the intimate life of middle-class homemakers in the post-war years demonstrates that family-oriented consumerism and the feminine mystique defined lifestyles for those middle-class women. Their research on magazines for middle-class women (including my own research on *Ladies' Home Journal* and *Good Housekeeping* in this period) proves that the image of woman as mother-housewife was celetrated and distributed through these magazines. However, the feminine mystique and the consumerism propagated by magazines for middle-class women were not the precise picture of working class world. In 1956, 2 million women workers carried the responsibility of head of the family, and over a half million of 11 million wives were the only earners in the family (Women's Bureau, 1957). Accordingly, the relation of working-class oriented magazines to their working-class readers requires a different kind of magazine concept and a different appeal. Therefore, a study of magazine for working-class women and their lives in the 1950s will produce information for criticizing this monolithic view of women in this period as based only on the middle-class women and magazines marketed for them.

## The 1950s and the Feminine Mystique

Thomas Hine (1986) characterizes the 1950s as the period of history's great "shopping sprees." The domestic commerce in the postwar years revealed the extent to which the economy had shifted to a mass-consumption base. The consumer orientation was evident in the growing importance of the service industries and trades. By the late 1950s the service industries employed more than half of all U.S. wage-earners, an indication of the nation's shift from an industrial to a "post-industrial" economy. The consumer market not only spread into all manner of personal services but also came to encompass an endless array of durable goods. By 1958, 96 percent of the nation's families owned refrigerators, 89 percent had washing machines, and 81 percent had acquired television sets (Grantham, 1987).

From this economic shift arose a corresponding culture of consumption, linked through advertising, television, magazines, and consuming activity. More significant than this celebration of having so many objects is, however, that a new way of life and the standards of how to live based on consumption activities were set and confirmed by many American men and women. Many American men and women throughout the nation accepted a new vision of a modern life and the images of new suburban men and women. Suburban men were portrayed as breadwinners and protectors of their family--"the new domesticated male," while women were portrayed as consumers and the chief decision makers in terms of purchase.

In relation to this spirit and the new way of life of this highly materialistic age, the dominant image of "woman" in the 1950s was one of a happy, lovely housewife and a dedicated, good mother. It was the image of women promoted by the feminine mystique that woman's place is in the home (Friedan, 1963). In the description of Betty Friedan's famous book, the feminine mystique circulating in the 1950s was a belief that women could achieve self-fulfillment and their own identities through functioning in the role of mother-housewife. The only practical question was, thus, how to adjust to their role as housewife-mother. If a woman had a problem in accepting her role as mother-housewife or in adjusting to this seemingly only road to fulfillment, she was regarded as having some psychological problems which made her unable to establish marriage and home. The feminine mystique in the 1950s was the image of modern American women celebrated in editorials, analyzed in clinic reports, and portrayed in advertisements in magazines for middle-class women. Through these outlets of the mass media and advertising, the feminine mystique was symbolically repackaged and distributed throughout the society.

The image of women that constituted the feminine mystique was disseminated through women's magazines, particularly magazines for middle-class women (e.g. Ladies Home Journal, Good Housekeeping, McCall's, Redbook). These women's magazines carried a lot of happy couple stories. Implicit in these stories were messages such as:

The only goal woman has in her life is to win and hold a man; the only dream woman pursues is to establish a sweet home with her husband and children; woman can have her identity only in relation to her husband and children; woman does not exist as an individual, but exists in and through others, especially her husband. It is obvious that the pervasiveness and the ubiquity of the theme of "togetherness" exploited in the articles of women's magazines made the search for woman's own identity and individuality unacceptable.

Aside from its economic importance, advertising occupies a central role in shaping the channels of communication. As a major form of modern social communication, advertising is also involved in creating and conveying social values. In very subtle ways, advertisements provide pictures of social reality. The image of woman as mother-housewife was widely exploited by advertising agencies and manufacturers of consumer goods in the 1950s. In many advertisements carried in middle-class women's magazines, the image of woman as mother-housewife, and the warmth, cheerfulness, and exuberance of American families were celebrated, which surely contributed to perpetuating the feminine mystique. There were many advertisements in these magazines that portrayed happy families as models of modern American life to which healthy, normal men and women should conform.

Yet, despite the interest in the woman's place in the 1950s, there have been little research about magazines for working-class women in this period. Magazines marketed explicitly for working-class women in the 1950s are the so called "confession" magazines or the family behavior magazines. Confession magazines are by no means the only way working-class women were influenced to accept assumptions, beliefs, and concepts about themselves and about society. However, a study of confession magazines would indicate the shaping presence of economic and ideological determinants and the social role of the confession industry among the working-class women. My specific purpose is to examine January 1955 True Story magazine: its fictional stories, and advertisements. I will analyze those verbal and visual discursive practices which construct the image of working-class women and portray the lives of working class in this period. I am more concerned, however, with a second objective, the attempt to determine whether and, if so, to what extent the image of woman and consumerism promoted by this magazine were related to the consciousness of working-class women about themselves and about society; in other words, to what extent True Story magazine's portrayal of women and their lives became an integrated part of a working-class world of the confession readers. This second objective would require an intimate survey of working-class women's life in the 1950s. First I will offer a theoretical framework to justify a cultural approach to the study of confession magazines. To situate this study historically, I then will discuss the economic strength of women in the 1950s and will provide a survey of studies on the working class, studies on the status and lifestyle of the working-class people in the 1950s. Finally, I will interpret the discursive practices in the stories and advertisements of True Story magazine within the historical conjuncture described.

## Mass Culture and Class Consciousness

Perhaps the most widely shared critical view of mass culture is the idea that we are psychically manipulated by the mass-media. Various European Marxists and American critical thinkers saw that mass culture provides a new form of social control. During past two decades, we have witnessed an increased concern about the role and function of mass media in relation with the ideological issues. This kind of critical communication research has been conducted mainly by the British culturalists and political economists, and these two approaches share the notion that media formulate and support the dominant ideology. However, they take the opposite directions in analyzing the cultural phenomena.

British cultural studies treats mass media as the ideological apparatus to produce and maintain social meanings. They stress the totality of symbolic forms of media message and assume that a careful analysis of artifacts can reveal the social structure within which these artifacts are embedded. By emphasizing the text and supposing that social explanation is determining, however, this approach does not analyze the social process through which the meanings of media message are constructed and interpreted.

On the contrary, the primary focus of political economists is an identification of the process through which mass media contribute to legitimizing the capital system by assuming mass media as vehicles of the dominant ideology. In this approach, mass media convey the values and norms of dominant class possessing the means of production and distribution of cultural material. In 'economic determinism', economy controls or decides cultural forms automatically, regardless of the wills or desires of its agents.

The 'economic determinism' fails to treat popular culture as a realm of symbolic forms. Since it presupposes a powerlessness of the social actor, cultural activities are always the direct or the indirect expression of the preceding economic condition. However, the external world is a humanly created world that is molded and changed by means of human being's theoretical-practical activity. Thus we must not ignore the active role of social actor in producing cultural products. This notion of human activity can also be justified on the level of symbolic interaction between the readers and the mass-mediated message.

In critical communication research, there have been a few attempts to combine the perspectives of British Cultural Studies and political economy. Without doubt, the most important and influential of recent attempts is found in the works of Raymond Williams. Williams suggests the humanist conception of culture as expressive forms of class experiences. Culture, to Williams, is the totality of lived experiences, and cultural practices are the expressions of relationships in a given historical moment. In this sense, cultural artifacts are related to more basic relationships in a society. Williams uses the term 'structure of feeling' to identify this connection between a particular artifact and more basic practices. As Grossberg (1977) states, this methodological notion

> commits the researcher to the impossible, to remain in constant touch with and faithful to the particularities of that which he [or she] is studying while he [or she]

> attempts to find a connection with more general relationships defining the structure of social life (p. 345).

In undertaking a critical cultural study, Williams is fully aware of power and domination in cultural practices. Using Gramsci's notion of hegemony, Williams formulates a non-deterministic theoretical model of cultural practice with relation to the issues of domination and control. Hegemony is a form of social control not by coercive force but by enticement. It is not always a top-down issue; it is not static; it is always changing; it is not monolithic in the sense that subcultural or antagonistic point of view is not only allowed but encouraged. That is, hegemony of a class is secured by ideological consent and conformity. This does not occur, however, without struggle or challenge. Hegemony is, to Williams (1977), "not only the conscious system of ideas and beliefs, but the whole lived social process as practically organized by specific and dominant meanings and values (p. 109)." It is a"lived system of meaning and values" which is continually active, hence not only to be renewed and defended, but also to be resisted and altered. Thus, within the theory of hegemony, we can see the possibility of emergent, alternative, or oppositional system as well as the existence of a central and dominant system of practices.

Williams argues that human experience is fundamentally class experience constrained by material and economic reality. Human experiences are thus differentiated by class, and hence, culture can be differentiated by class experience. My perspective is informed by the work of Raymond Williams. We will have thereby already begun to justify an approach to True Story magazine, as that medium, not merely of ideological manipulation, but also of the way in which social and historical content must be first be tapped and given some initial expression, since social reality and the stereotypes of our experience of everyday social reality are the raw material with which confession magazines are supposed to work. It is particularly so in the case of True Story magazine, since the stories of this magazine are presented as true accounts of the writer's experience. The writers are supposed to be very much like the readers; they are blue-collar women who want to share their experiences.

As this approach suggests, then, underlying class reality needs to be examined in order to situate concrete narratives historically. This will be discussed in the next sections.

## Economic Strength of Women in the 1950s

For women, the ideological picture diverged further and further from reality. The ideology declared that men made enormous salaries so women could have "leisure" to care for a large number of children and mind a beautiful, time-consuming house. In reality, more and more women had to go to work if the family was to earn a minimally acceptable income. In 1952, U.S. Department of Labor, Women's Bureau published a booklet on the status of women in the United States (Women's Bureau, 1952). According to this report, about 33 percent of the women (14 years old and over) in the United States were in the civilian labor force. The 1952 figure was around 19 million. This proportion is slightly lower than it was during

1944 at the peak of World War II production; in absolute numbers, the 1951 annual average of 19,272,000 working women was somewhat higher than that of 1944. According to a profile of women workers in 1956 prepared by the Women's Bureau (1957), over a third of the 60.7 million women (14 years old and over) in the United States were in the labor force in 1956. These 22 million women included half the 11 million single women; two-fifths of the 11.5 million women who were widowed, divorced, or separated, or whose husbands were in the Armed Services or employed away from home; three-tenths of the 38.3 million married women whose husbands were living at home. They were almost a third of all workers in the country. Data provided by the Bureau of the Census (1950a, 1950b) reveal two significant trends: (1) the growing proportion of married women in the labor force and (2) the increasing employment of older women. According to these data, married women constituted 55 percent of all women workers in 1951. Also, the trend toward the increasing employment of older women had been especially marked since 1940. In the 10 years between 1940 and 1950 the number of women workers between 35 and 44 years of age increased by more than 50 percent and those between 45 and 64 increased by almost 86 percent. In 1945, working women who were 45 years of age and over formed 24 percent of all women workers. By 1952, they comprised 32 percent of the women in the labor force. The median age of women workers has risen from 26 years in 1900 to 37 years in 1952 and 39 years in 1956.

My interpretation of these facts is that more younger women chose to stay home in the 1950s compared to the previous decades. Some of them were in school or college, but most of them were married and caring for small children. A study by Garfinkle (Women's Bureau, 1957) indicates that marriage and children were the most important factors tending to keep women out of the work force. According to his survey, most women who work take their first job before they are 20, usually when they are 16 to 18 years old. Many have already left the work force by the time they are 19. As the age of marriage has lowered, the ages of both taking their first job and leaving the work force have lowered. Reentries and some new entries into the work force were largely due to economic necessity. Many married women were pushed into the labor market because earnings from other sources were insufficient to meet the family's needs, particularly if there were young children or other heavy family responsibilities.

These data tell us much about the economic status of women in the 1950s which reveals both the myth and the reality of women's world in this period. Myth declared that woman's place is in the home; women are not seriously attached to the labor force; they work only for extra pocket money until they get married. On the contrary, the reality shows an increase in women's participation in the work force during this historical juncture.

## The Patterns of Working-Class Life

Post-World War II marketing revolution discovered the commercial and social potential of an essentially working-class reading public. Since the working-class market was becoming important to the advertisers, there arose interests in the working-class world and the working-class family's marketing behavior. Social Research, Inc. in Chicago conducted a survey on working-class families, the majority of the working-class sample consists of couple in which the woman is a subscriber to one of confession magazines by Macfadden Publications. This was published in 1961 as Status of the Working Class in Changing American Society (hereinafter referred to as SWCCAS). This report describes in detail the lifestyle and consumption pattern of the working class in the 1950s. It points out two basic fallacies about the working class. The first is to equate "middle income" with "middle class"; the second is to equate "suburb" with "middle-class community." In 1959 The United States Department of Labor released a thick report entitled How American Buying Habits Change (hereafter referred to as Labor Department Report). This report states:

> The wage earner's way of life is well-nigh indistinguishable from that of his salaried co-citizens.....the typical wage earner no longer lives in an identifiably 'working-class' neighborhood....The adoption of middle- class attitudes, the change in what workers have come to expect, even more than the greatly augmented real family income, points to this great revolution in class relations (p. 7)."

Contrary to the Labor Department report, however, SWCCAC indicates the distinguishing characteristics of the working-class life. Based on the intimate survey of the working-class people, SWCCAC proves that the movement of working-class people to suburbs was a march to a better standard of living, made possible by prosperity, and not a march into the middle class. Increased economic good fortune was not the same as social mobility into a higher class.

Social class is a complex configuration based on a combination of factors both external (and easily counted) and internal (and requiring interpretive analysis). The main factors upon which a person's social class is based include amount and type of education, type of work, type of house a person lives in, type of neighborhood in which the house is located, but also the kind of people she/he associates with and the person's outlook on life, including motives, beliefs and values. Based on these factors, SWCCAC presents a general description of the middle-class as a baseline for understanding the description of the working class which comprises the bulk of the report. Summary of this description is as follows:

First, the middle-class person needs to maintain status. The middle-class person strives to maintain a sense of stable position in society. This striving involves much more than the desire for an adequate income. The lower middle-class person is much concerned with the outer world's evaluation of her/him as a person and of her/his actions. The standards of the community are strongly internalized in the form of a watchful conscience, so that the middle-class man and woman are constantly motivated to avoid anxiety by doing what the community approves of.

This need to maintain (and if possible to improve) status affects the way middle-class people make choices and decisions in various life areas. The details are like these: (1) One should live in a neighborhood that is well thought of. (2) Being educated is part of the way of life, not just a ticket to a better job. (3) Middle-class man expect to grow in his occupations. The middle-class man tends to define his job in terms of its responsibility.

He is oriented toward growth and advancement in responsibility, as well as in earnings. (4) A good family life is the foundation of a good life. There is also the strong expectation that, while the family comes first, interests outside the family are also important. It is important to have friends; middle-class people are more likely to depend on friends than on relatives for social activity.

Contrary to a commonly held view, the working class was not becoming, and certainly has not become, middle-class. The survey presents some important differences in outlook and life style of these two groups. Important characteristics of working-class life reveal significant points of difference from the middle-class. (1) Working-class people are much more interested in enjoying the bounty of American life than they are in achieving or maintaining a certain status. (2) To working-class people, immediate or short-range gratification is more important than planning. The working-class person's relative lack of interest in status is one aspect of the over-all pattern of working-class motivation and outlook. Concern with status implies a concern with what the community at large thinks, and not just what the people one knows think. Working-class people are much more oriented to the immediate interpersonal relationships in which they are involved. Their world is more circumscribed and it is more concrete. (3) The working-class person places less value on education than does the middle-class person. (4) Education is regarded as preparation for a job. (5) Working-class men are more strongly oriented to job security than to advancement. (6) The traditional marriage relationship in the working class is one in which husband and wife have distinct and separate roles, the husband being the breadwinner and the wife being responsible not only for keeping house but for bringing up the children. There is little sense of shared family life. (7) Working-class people participate socially with their relatives. The extended kin group of parents, brothers, sisters, in-laws, uncles, aurts and cousins plays a far greater role in the life of the working-class than in the middle-class. (8) Husband and wife tend to have few, if any, friends in common. Relationships with friends tend to be on a single-sex basis. (9) Relatives tend to be more important than friends. Often, relatives are the only friends.

The results of this survey are, to a high degree, supported by other studies on the American working class (Blum, A.F., 1964; Bogart, L., 1964; Patterson, J.M., 1964; Rainwater, L., & Handel, G., 1964; Sexton, P.C., 1962).

It was generally accepted that the mass media provide a common source of widely shared information, values, and symbols for workers as for other elements in American life. At the very least, its was assumed that the mass media represent perhaps the most powerful current by which blue-collar workers are swept into the main stream of conformity to middle-class values and aspirations (Bogart, 1964). One of the striking results of these studies, however, is the fact that the mass media did not play a powerful role in the working-class life (Rainwater, L., & Handel, G., 1964). There is a large literature which documents the isolated mass media in the working-class life. Particularly, Herbert Gans (1962) has nicely documented the resistance which traditional working-class people bring to bear against the editorial and advertising messages communicated by the mass media. A review of the evidence suggests that, contrary to stereotyped expectations, the mass-media experience of blue-collar workers and their families were not so remarkably close to the American main line. Bogart (1964) comments:

> In general, the working-man's use of the media is less active than that of his middle-class counterpart; his media experience, like his social experience, takes place within a more narrow and constricted range.He tends to be distrustful of fantasy and to prefer media content which runs closest to his own day-to-day personal experience (p. 428).

There seems to exist a general consensus among social scientists as to the reason for this, which is well articulated by Blum (1964) as follows: the traditional working-class group, tightly bounded by a close-knit network of peers, expresses its solidarity through common values in its network, and discounts, selects, and molds mass communication in terms of its own social realities.

The differences between working-class and the middle-class are significant for businessmen who want to sell their products. The working-class market is not only big and important; it is a different market. The working-class family has different goals and different problems and often a different view of the world from those of families in other market segments. Consequently the answers to "what" and "where" and "why" the working-class family buys is frequently quite different from those for other market segments.

Based on the characteristics of the working-class family, Patterson (1964) provides a tentative explanation of their implications for the working-class family's marketing behavior.

These are as follows: (1) The limited-experience world, limited in experiences both direct and vicarious, tends to cause working-class family expenditures to be concentrated into fewer categories of goods and services and more in terms of immediate consumption than is true of middle-class families, where the experience world is much broader. (2) Working-class families strive only for a "common man" level of recognition and respectability. For example, the emphasis on the contents of the house rather than the house itself. For the middle-class family, the house is the status symbol par excellence. Perhaps even more, it is a symbol of upward striving and of collective self. But for families whose upward mobility is restricted by limited social skills and perspectives, the house apparently symbolizes something much more practical and utilitarian. Consequently, working-class housing tastes run to "decent," "clean," "new," "safe," and the like. (3) Lower-lower-class member's basic pessimism causes him to spend in ways that promise immediate gratification. Caplovitz (1964) points out that in contrast to the conspicuous consumption of the upper strata observed by Veblen, the blue-collar classes today are apt to engage in compensatory consumption. Appliances, automobiles, and the dream of a home of their own can become compensations for blocked social mobility.

One of the findings of SWCCAS proves that Patterson's explanation is plausible. According to SWCCAS, owning a house is significant to working-class people because it gives them a feeling of independence, of being autonomous, established and mature. Owning a house means not only physical comfort and a sense of independence. More generally, it signifies a good life, enabling the working-class person to feel that he is no longer among the disadvantaged. It means security; when you own it, you feel more secure.

## The World of Confession Magazines

My readings of the stories and advertisements of January1955 True Story magazine are situated within the historical context of the working-class lifestyle in the 1950s. I will analyze how the narratives of these cultural artifacts constructed frames of meaning for conceptualizing working-class people and their lives in relation with this historical reality of the 1950s.

The "world" we are here talking about has been created by True Story magazine which the trade calls "confession" and which, for the most part, carries either "confessions" or "romance" in its stories. It appears monthly and sell largely on news stands. In general, newsstand magazines place more emphasis upon sensationalism on the covers. True Story, too, offers sexy pictures and sensational titles ("Schoolroom Scandal," "My Children Wished me Dead!").

The confession magazines were originated by Bernard McFadden. Because he received so many letters concerning sexual and marital problems from the readers of the very popular magazine, Physical Culture, McFadden published, he decided to publish a magazine for women in which true accounts of personal romances and problems were told in the first person. It was McFadden's intention to keep the "writing writers out." Stories were to be true accounts, written in language which the average working-class women could understand and to which they could relate. Although McFadden has died and the magazine and its spin-offs have changed hands several times since 1919, the editorial policy remains the same.

True Story is one of the Macfadden confession magazines, which is directed to younger, 18 to 35-year-old, "blue-collar" women. The stories of True Story magazine are presented as true accounts of the writer's experience. To enforce this illusion of reality, the stories are always told in the first personal and anonymous. The magazine says they have "of course" changed names and places in the narratives. Identification through the first person point of view and the flavor of authenticity requires settings congruent with that of the target audience. The setting of the stories is likely to avoid places dominated by large-scale industrial organizations. Small towns and cities and the South and Midwest are relatively favored locales. This is fairly representative of the geographical distribution of readership (Look Magazine, 1955). The appeal of identification and realism are the hallmarks of the behavior magazine format. The stories are accompanied with photographs instead of the more idealized techniques of oil, tempera, or water color.

This pretense to reality is apparently impressive and attractive to readers, for many of these magazines have enormous circulations. The letters they write to the editors are typically grateful and interested. For example, here is one which appeared in True Story for March 1955:

> ...I never found a better magazine than yours. Your stories are so beautiful and true to life, and so easy to understand. The only thing which is too bad is that it appears only once a month.

Attention to reader response on the part of the editors is high. True Story runs features that attract reader response, such as advice columns, story popularity contests, household hints, and so on. It seems probable, therefore, that the world of the confession magazines is an important part of the experience of millions of women. It is therefore a world worth exploring.

a) Reading true stories in True Story magazine for January 1955

Four double-length true stories and seven true stories formed the basis of the analysis. The world of the True Story magazine was a woman's world, a young person's world, a working-class world, characterized by violence, overpowering sex drives, and broken homes. Throughout all the format features, the themes of sex and the physical nature of people were heavily played upon. Explicit sex was forbidden but sexual problems such as premarital seduction, rape, and adultery were common in the stories.

Sex drives were typically described as "overwhelming" and "overpowering." In most of the cases, sex took place within the boundaries of an emotional relationship with one male. In those relationships where sex occurred, the results for the people involved were destructive. In relations where sex occurred, most of the relationships worsened because of the event. Much of this, of course, happened in cases of premarital sex. Virginity was a necessary condition for a happy marriage. Cantor and Jones (1983) notice that rape rarely occurs in the stories directed at middle-class women. But it was a common form of punishment for working-class readers. It seems to be more than a coincidence that one of the findings in SWCCAS was that the confession reader looks upon men as more powerful, dominant, sexually active and demanding than does her white collar sister. According to Cantor and Jones (1983), in magazine fiction directed to middle-class white women, the punishment is internal, coming primarily from psychological suffering; the women are prone to repress expressions of anger and become depressed or anxious when breaking commonly accepted norms. In working-class magazine fiction, however, the punishments for breaking norms or customs were external, and stories consistently taught a strong moral message.

The most common problem of these stories was, therefore, to get these sex drives in socially accepted channels. Thus it is not surprising that the most frequently and clearly stated goal in these stories was a happy and secure family life. As one story in my sample puts it, "The two most important things a woman needs are self-respect and the right man's love.... A good home and marital relationships are more to be desired than any other success." Here are the links between the values of legitimate versus illegitimate behavior. The world of the confessions seems to operate under a stern code of justice which demands punishment for every transgression. On the one hand, therefore, these stories described "overpowering" sex drives, and, on the other hand, they portrayed a goal of self-respect and marital happiness which can only be attained by adjusting to the values of marriage and family and by not threatening the stability of these institutions.

The basic formula of the stories was one of simple human versus brutal world. In most of the cases, the disruptive troubles that beset the stories were those that have personalistic references; that is, "people" were the causes of trouble in the stories. The complications in the lives of the narrators derived not from aspects of a larger world or "society" (indeed, there is little that can be called social consciousness in the stories), but rather problems came from the people in life, especially those close to the narrators, and from within the narrators themselves. The characters in the stories shouldered the burden of responsibility individually rather than collectively as members of society. Specific blame fell on people, rarely upon conditions. In general, most of social institutions appeared in terms of persons and services.

As far as economic problems go, so relatively little attention among the worldly goals were paid to economic striving. Economic striving in the world of the confession magazine consisted of stretching the paycheck to meet the monthly payments. It did not mean raising social aspirations above that of its reader class. This result explains why the status of working-class women most of them having jobs was not improved in their marriage relationships. Rather, SWCCAS found that the confession reader does not feel as much the center and prime mover of the family as does the white collar reader. According to this study, working-class women see their husbands as more independent and self-sufficient, they do not feel, as white collar magazine readers do, that their wife-mother role nor their economic contribution will necessarily stably tie their men down.

Two characteristics of the *True Story* magazine are quickly noted. One of these I have already suggested: the stern, fixed quality of the puritanical code by which problems are solved. As far as problems go, this world of *True Story* magazine revolves around the central problem of most women's lives: making a success of love and marriage. The other is the appeal of identification and realism. The stories of *True Story* were presented as true accounts of the writer's experience. The writers were very much like the readers; they were blue-collar women who want to share their experiences. A woman can therefore turn to this magazine for reassurance that other people also have problem like hers. Furthermore, a reader can turn to this magazine for good advice on some of the problems.

The advice the reader can get from *True Story* magazine is an unreflecting drift toward adjustment. They are invited to accept the authority of a puritanical judge. This puritan judge is a hidden authority. There is very little reference to this ultimate source of wisdom. Neither characters in the stories nor the trouble they have have no conscious relatedness to the larger social context. Their act become, therefore, irrelevant as social protest. Wage-town protest becomes senseless individual sin, socially irrelevant in the world of the confessions.

As their flame of rebellion was controlled and divorced from its broader social context, economic aspiration of the working-class people was repressed. This result is supported by an previous research on confession magazines. Schramm (1961) once read and analyzed a random sample of 100 confession stories. Schramm did find that where economic striving (rather than spending) was the goal (in about 15 per cent of the stories) it had a 50-50 chance of involving the character in crime. Unmistakable, again, is the implicit moral of no escape--either into understanding or into success--from the conflicting pressures of society.

### b) Reading advertisements in True Story magazine for January 1955

The style and tenor of advertisements carried in True Story seemed congruent with the True Story style of the "dramatic realism" and personalized approach. Photographs dominated the advertising illustrations in this issue of the True Story. Common sense attribute to photography a literal, matter-of-fact realism. One obvious contribution of the photograph to the selling argument is its connotation of authenticity and truth. One of the most significant ways in which ads promoted their products was to use photographs with the flavor of sincerity and truth. Playtex Living Gloves addressed their ads to the "working-class" housewives whose hands were still "lovely" with the Playtex. A striking difference between rough red hands and soft lovely hands was easily demonstrated with a photographic evidence in dramatizing the time-honored "before and after" story. Another attribute of the photograph as a selling tool is its association with a sense of the "new." The tabloids and a successful formula of True Story had educated the public to expect the latest news in photographic form. Pond's skin lotion claimed its products are "scientifically years ahead" in its "before and after" parable of historical progress. Furthermore, Jergens lotion offered an additional expert endorsement. It claimed "a national research laboratory states Jergens Lotion proves more effective than any other lotion tested for stopping 'detergent damage'."

One of the True Story formulae, women's personal, confessional accounts of their experiences, was employed in the form of the testimonial or endorsement. A personal approach combined with the image of 'authority' promoted consumer goods such as facial cream and toilet soap. Marchioness of Romania recommended Pond's cold cream for skin care. A testimonial by the famous actress Grace Kelly, complete with her photograph and signature, and her personal notes appeared in Lux toilet soap advertisement. Obviously, this ad explcited a personalized, confessional copy style with an image of 'authority' to appeal to the "tabloid minds" of *True Story* readers.

## Conclusion

The mass media today are a significant societal force in forming and delimiting public assumptions and attitudes. They continually create meaning and values, and define "social reality." Also, the basic economic structures set limits on the ideologies and commonsense understandings that circulate as ways of making sense of the world. My study of confession magazines indicate the shaping presence of economic and ideological determinants and the social role of the confession industry among the working-class women. *True Story* publishers regarded their magazine as having a unique cultural task and delicate social mission. The function of the confession narrative was indeed to encourage the conviction that the problems of daily lives of the working-class people in the United States is an ethical rather than an economic matter or a class/sex issue. The displacement of social and historical analysis by ethical judgments and considerations is generally the sign of an ideological maneuver and of the intent to mystify. True Story magazine is therefore an excellent example, not merely of ideological manipulation, but also of successful manipulation and containment. Advertisements in the True Story conveyed consumer culture by appropriating the basic formula of the fictional stories in the same magazine. Indeed, their selling messages were repackaged within the interests and verbal and visual practices of "true stories."

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